ROMANESQUE FRANCE

BY
VIOLET R. MARKHAM

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Markham, Violet Rose.
Romanesque France; studies in the archaeology and history of the 12th century

ROMANESQUE FRANCE

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MOISSAC : CLOISTER.

[Frontispiece

ROMANESQUE FRANCE

STUDIES IN THE ARCHÆOLOGY AND HISTORY OF THE 12TH CENTURY

By VIOLET R. MARKHAM, C.H.

"Sing me the town they saw
Withouten fleck or flaw,
Aflame, more fine than glass
Of fair Abbayes the boast,
More glad than wax of cost
Doth make at Candlemas
The Lifting of the Host."

D. M. DOLBEN.

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TO

THE DEAR MEMORY

OF

SALLY

1908—1927

INTRODUCTION

This book is an attempt to make better known to English travellers the beauty and interest of the ancient churches of France. Though France is our near neighbour, its wealth in architecture, especially during the pre-Gothic period, is not always realised by our own countrymen. French Romanesque does not figure largely in English literature apart from occasional references in books of travel, or more detailed accounts in books on archæology. It is often dismissed rather summarily as a rude precursor of Gothic, and its essential grandeur ignored save by a minority of enthusiasts. Norman churches in England are known and admired, but less attention has been paid to the noble family on the Continent of which they are a branch.

In France the situation naturally is different. Scholars of the greatest eminence have made a life study of the architecture and art of the twelfth century as revealed by the monuments of their own country. In critical faculty and artistic flair the French as a nation are unsurpassed and unsurpassable. If, like the rest of the world, they succumb now and again, as centuries come and go, to the waves of bad taste that invade Europe periodically—much as the influenza invades it—their return to health and sanity is never long delayed. It is therefore at the feet of French archæologists and historians that the English reader must sit if he would learn about the Romanesque period in France. But the men whose scholarship has illumined the twelfth century can only be studied in bulky and expensive volumes that overflow a suitcase and are not designed as travelling companions. I have made bold, therefore, to enter the field with the present book, in the hope that it may encourage English readers not only to visit the churches described, but to follow up the subject subsequently in the admirable French literature that exists.

Romanesque art is a great intellectual heritage, and to be made free of it is to acquire a new sense of quality in life. An old building is more than a mass of brick and stone, however carefully assembled. Though architecture works through the most static of mediums, it is nevertheless the most vital and organic of the arts. It is the great script of the human race, a testimony mute but eloquent to man's exaltations, agonies, and unconquerable mind. To read its message aright is to enter into the very soul of history, and history so viewed is no mere record of things dead and gone, but a living experience of which we ourselves are the product. And what is true of architecture at its best is true of architecture at its worst. The meanest Little Bethel that blinks a brick and stucco eye on the drab surroundings of a colliery village, the most florid imitation of the antique that decorates bank or office, are poor relations, however degenerate, of a great family. They have fallen from their high estate, but they have behind them a noble if forgotten ancestry.

Romanesque architecture reached its highest expression in the first half of the twelfth century. Looking backwards from this standpoint across the first thousand years of Christendom, we realise the slow evolution of mediæval society from the welter of the Dark Ages; looking forward, we find light thrown on the new forces that were to gather weight and influence with the modern world. It was a wonderful moment when Europe was alive as it has seldom been before or since; when, thanks to a very practical internationalism, frontiers were no bar to the free passage of men and ideas from country to country; when Eastern works of art were being imported eagerly into the West, and Île de France sculpture was being turned out at Jerusalem; when Henry II. laid the foundations of law and Abélard lit the torch of the New Learning; when Suger worked at St. Denis and Eleanor of Aquitaine held court at Acre; when the great Abbots ruled at Cluny and the Troubadours went singing along the highways of Europe.

Architecture and history go hand in hand, and I have tried to show them in relation one to another. From the great canvas of the twelfth century I have sketched here a

scene and there a figure to serve as a background to the churches, though the canvas in all its majesty far transcends the limits of any one book.

Romanesque architecture in France falls within various schools more or less well defined. This volume accordingly is divided into sections that correspond with the various schools, and in each area I have selected a few typical buildings as illustrating the local style. The first five chapters are devoted to general principles and a brief examination of " origins." We must go far back through the centuries to the days of the Early Church to find the headwaters of mediæval architecture and sculpture. Christianity and Christian art did not arise in a vacuum, but form part of an historical order. Pagan and Oriental elements that the Church took over from older civilisations crop up in a very surprising way in the art of the Middle Ages. In more than one chapter I have left the strict limits of the twelfth century to speak of the Gallo-Roman world and the monuments that preceded those of the Carolingian and Romanesque periods. It is very doubtful whether Gallo-Roman influence can be regarded as a bridge between the fall of Rome and the Carolingian revival. But in any event the gap is one of a few centuries only. When architecture revived many splendid classical monuments that have long since perished were still in existence, and may have influenced the new developments.

This book has no pretensions to the scholarship of a trained archæologist. But it can at least claim to be based not only on a careful study of the scholarship of others, but on personal acquaintance with the churches described. It is the fruit of many journeys to France undertaken at different times, and it would be impossible to cover even the limited ground surveyed in the course of one or two visits. In an appendix at the end I have given a list, corresponding with the various schools, of other fine Romanesque churches in France, or of churches with Romanesque details of considerable interest.

As one who has found in French Romanesque an endless source of interest and delight, I should like to warn travellers against the attempt to see too much and do too much. It

is the very prodigality of French religious art, and the piling up of masterpieces in villages and remote little towns far from main roads, that make it difficult even for an enthusiast to cover the ground. And distances being great—for France is a very large country—there is nothing for it (if saturation point is to be avoided) but to concentrate on a certain number of places, and rigidly leave the others for a subsequent visit. To scramble about towns between trains, or to be hurled from point to point in a motor-car, is merely to return home full of comprehensible disgust for the past and for all that concerns religious art.

The attached bibliography gives the list of the principal sources of information on which I have drawn, but I must mention certain books that have been in a special sense beacons along the path. Among these, first and foremost is the work of Count Robert de Lasteyrie on "L'Architecture Religieuse en France à l'Epoque Romane," a volume that in its scholarship, its clarity, its fine critical sense, is a classic in the literature of archæology. Friends no less intimate have been the admirable volumes of Monsieur Emile Mâle on "L'Art Religieux du 12ème Siècle" and "L'Art Religieux du 13ème Siècle," the comprehensive "Histoire de l'Art," edited by Monsieur André Michel, Monsieur Camille Enlart's "Manuel d'Archéologie Française," and Abbé Victor Terret's volumes on "La Sculpture Bourguignonne." The extent to which I have drawn on these authors will be evident to any reader of the following pages. A table of some selected dates in history and archæology is included, and also a glossary of architectural terms.

May I apologise for the use here and there of French terms? To sprinkle one language with the words of another is, generally speaking, a detestable practice. For any English writer English should surely suffice, without appealing for occasional alms, so to speak, to other tongues. But if I have been obliged to break what I regard as a golden rule, I must say in excuse that when it comes to early mediæval architecture and sculpture the French have, in fact, a richer and more complete technical vocabulary than our own, and certain words have either no exact

equivalent or are so unhappy when translated that I prefer to leave them as they are. Studio, image maker, rosette, chain mouldings, are not really the equivalent of "atelier," "imagier," "rosace," "entrelac." Again, though I have sometimes used the orthodox translation "scroll" for the word "rinceau," yet the word scroll conveys little real sense of the splendid floral designs and wreaths of fruit and flowers expressed by the French term. I trust, therefore, that my occasional lapses in this sense may be pardoned me.

Thanks to distinguished scholars are a matter of some delicacy for writers like myself, to whom it should be a point of honour not to try to confer lustre on their own modest pages by adorning them with the names of eminent men. But Mr. Royall Tyler, without whose sympathetic encouragement this book would never have seen the light, will, I hope, allow me to acknowledge the very special debt I owe him. As generous as a friend as he is gifted as a scholar, he has found time, in spite of arduous administrative duties in Hungary, to help, to advise, and to criticise these studies in a field that he has made his own, thus opening for me that great realm of mediæval art to which he has devoted his own brilliant abilities. Mr. Tyler has added to an obligation already great by reading the book in proof, and his suggestions at this final stage have been invaluable in remedying defects and inaccuracies. Whatever good may exist in "Romanesque France" is due to him; the faults are wholly mine.

To my friend, Sir Ernest Wallis Budge, I must express my warm thanks for the interest he has shown in the general plan of the book and for much stimulating help and criticism about the earlier chapters. I owe him special gratitude for the fact that his encouragement has often taken the form of steady pressure to persevere with my task, in the midst of other and at times distracting claims.

My thanks are also due to Abbé Victor Terret for his kindness and courtesy in allowing me to reproduce the illustrations of the Magi and of Eve on pages 152 and 160, from his own magnificent volume on Autun.

Finally, I should like to make a general expression of thanks to a group of people whose services to writers in general I feel receive far less recognition than is their due. I refer to the staffs and keepers of our national museums, and in particular to the Superintendent and staff of the Reading Room of the British Museum, where my work has principally been done. Comparisons are odious, and I have no wish to dwell in a critical spirit on experiences and adventures that may overtake students when abroad. But it is a great pleasure to dwell on the positive merits of the personnel in our own museums and libraries. Officials high and low are ready at all times to place their knowledge and experience at the service of any student, known or unknown, who appeals to them. The conduct of the Reading Room at the British Museum in its efficiency and courtesy is a national asset, and one of the first importance to the student. Excellent though the organisation of the Reading Room, the very vastness of the Library may prove a little bewildering when references and authorities have to be traced, and Mr. Sladen and his colleagues grudge neither time nor trouble in assisting readers to find what they want. Help is always forthcoming and given with a readiness that never fails. Anyone who has had to deal with the section of the General Catalogue that falls under the head of "Academies," will appreciate, as I have had occasion to appreciate, what the services of the staff mean to the reading public.

I for one could not bring my task to a close without paying a tribute to their work.

VIOLET R. MARKHAM.

WITTERSHAM,
BRADENHAM,
LONDON.

SIR JOHN MURRAY, K.C.V.O.

Obiit 30 *November*, 1928.

Since this Introduction was drafted there is one acknowledgment of thanks and gratitude that must now, alas, take a different form from what I had hoped and intended.

The death of Sir John Murray has left not only the whole world of letters the poorer, but it is one that necessarily brings a sense of personal loss to any writer whose good fortune it was to be in touch with him as a publisher. My real acquaintance with Sir John began with his acceptance of the MS. of this book, and I shall esteem it all my days a privilege and an honour to have worked with him for some months on the cordial and happy terms that grew up between us.

It was a revelation to me to find that a publisher of his eminence and many claims should take such infinite pains with a book in proof stage. A third set of proofs with Sir John's own corrections and suggestions was a novel experience which turned what normally I find a dreary task into one of real enjoyment. Sir John was interested in "Romanesque France," and his interest took a very practical form. From the early summer till the time when illness laid him low, a long and animated correspondence passed almost weekly between us, in the course of which the varied matter of this book was subjected to criticism as wise and as searching as it was kind. No point large or small in history, in geography, in archæology but received Sir John's attention. The turn of a phrase, questions of grammatical fitness and propriety—nothing was allowed to pass without comment. To a writer it was an experience as rare as invaluable to meet the challenge of so high and exacting a standard. The correct rendering of some words on page 51—"Gilabertus vir non incertus"—led to an amusing triangular correspondence between

Sir John Murray, Mr. Tyler, and myself. My first over-easy and colloquial rendering of Gilabertus' somewhat cryptic signature—" Gilabertus, a man who knows a thing or two "—called down simultaneous protests on my head from both Budapest and Albemarle Street. Mr. Tyler as a critic was as difficult to satisfy as Sir John, but it was Sir John who suggested the form of words finally adopted—" Gilabertus, a man who knows his own mind." Daudet's " Mule du Pape " and other stories in " Lettres de mon Moulin " had by some chance escaped Sir John's notice, and I am glad to think that the little volume I sent him during the summer proved, so he told me, a pleasant addition to his holiday literature. That he did not live to see " Romanesque France " in its completed form will always be to me a matter of profound regret. But short though our acquaintance, it was long enough for one of the last of his authors to appreciate the outstanding merits of this doyen of English publishers—a great gentleman and a great figure in the world of letters, whose distinction of mind and heart makes it indeed a proud memory to have won any measure of his friendship and interest.

V. R. M.

CONTENTS

PART I

THE ORIGINS OF FRENCH ROMANESQUE ARCHITECTURE AND SCULPTURE

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	ART AND THE EARLY CHURCH	3
II.	THE CAROLINGIAN RENAISSANCE AND THE BIRTH OF ROMANESQUE	23
III.	THE BUILDING OF THE ABBEYS	43
IV.	ROMANESQUE SCULPTURE	57
V.	SYMBOLISM	71

PART II

BURGUNDY

VI.	DIJON AND THE DUKES OF BURGUNDY	85
VII.	CLUNY—PART 1: THE RISE	101
	CLUNY—PART 2: THE FALL	114
VIII.	VÉZELAY	125
IX.	AUTUN	146
X.	A DIGRESSION FROM THE TWELFTH TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY: BROU	162

PART III

LANGUEDOC AND TOULOUSE

XI.	TOULOUSE AND THE ALBIGENSES	181
XII.	TOULOUSE SCULPTURE	198
XIII.	MOISSAC	214
XIV.	BEAULIEU—SOUILLAC—CAHORS	229

PART IV

AUVERGNE AND CENTRE

XV.	AUVERGNE AND SIDONIUS APOLLINARIS	241
XVI.	THE ROMANESQUE CHURCHES OF AUVERGNE	255
XVII.	LE PUY	266
XVIII.	CONQUES	277

PART V

POITOU AND AQUITAINE

CHAPTER		PAGE
XIX.	POITOU AND THE PLANTAGENETS	289
XX.	POITIERS AND ITS CHURCHES	302
XXI.	ST. SAVIN	321
XXII.	AULNAY	332
XXIII.	MELLE	341
XXIV.	ANGOULÊME AND CHÂTRES	346
XXV.	SAINTES	354
XXVI.	THE DOMED CHURCHES OF AQUITAINE	361

PART VI

PROVENCE

XXVII.	AVIGNON AND THE BRIDGE BUILDERS	371
XXVIII.	THE CAMARGUE AND ROMAN ARLES	378
XXIX.	ST. TROPHIME OF ARLES	387
XXX.	ST. GILLES	395
XXXI.	MONTPELLIER AND LA MAGUELONE	406
XXXII.	ST. GUILHEM LE DÉSERT	418

PART VII

NORMANDY AND ÎLE DE FRANCE

XXXIII.	THE GOTHIC TRANSITION	431
XXXIV.	SOME PERSONS AND CHURCHES IN NORMANDY	443
XXXV.	CAEN AND BAYEUX	457
XXXVI.	ST. DENIS	464
XXXVII.	THE ROYAL PORTAL OF CHARTRES	469
	APPENDIX I.	489
	APPENDIX II.	492
	APPENDIX III.	496
	APPENDIX IV.	499
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	501
	INDEX	505

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

	FACING PAGE
MOISSAC: CLOISTER	*Frontispiece*
SOUILLAC: TRUMEAU	66
AUTUN: CAPITAL OF NAVE	68
AUTUN: CAPITAL OF NAVE	76
CLUNY: CAPITAL OF THIRD MUSICAL TONE	120
CLUNY: CAPITAL OF SEASONS (SPRING)	120
VÉZELAY: TYMPANUM	132
VÉZELAY: VIEW OF NAVE	138
VÉZELAY: CAPITAL OF HARVEST AND VINTAGE	144
AUTUN: CAPITAL OF MAGI	152
AUTUN: BAS RELIEF OF EVE	160
TOULOUSE MUSEUM: CAPITAL OF BEAR HUNT (LA DAURADE)	206
TOULOUSE MUSEUM: CAPITAL STORY OF JOB (LA DAURADE)	212
MOISSAC: TYMPANUM (VISION OF APOCALYPSE)	216
MOISSAC: TRUMEAU (SIDE VIEW)	218
MOISSAC: SIDE WALL OF PORCH	220
MOISSAC: CAPITAL OF CLOISTER	224
SOUILLAC: BAS RELIEF OF THEOPHILUS	234
CAHORS: FIGURE OF CHRIST FROM TYMPANUM	236
NOTRE DAME DU PORT: CAPITAL OF PSYCHOMACHIA	260
NOTRE DAME DU PORT: CAPITAL	266
POITIERS: NOTRE DAME LA GRANDE	310
AULNAY: CRUCIFIXION OF ST. PETER	334
ANGOULÊME: BAS RELIEF OF GRYPHON	346
CHÂTRES	352
ARLES: CLOISTER OF ST. TROPHIME	388
ARLES: ST. TROPHIME (APOSTLES OF PORTAL)	392
ST. GILLES: PORTAL	400
CAEN: LA TRINITÉ (ABBAYE AUX DAMES)	446
JUMIÈGES	454
CHARTRES: ROYAL PORTAL (STATUES)	468
CHARTRES: ROYAL PORTAL (SHEPHERDS OF NATIVITY)	482
CHARTRES: ROYAL PORTAL (A QUEEN)	486

ERRATA

Page 21, line 11, *after* Gospel, for full stop *read* comma.

Page 26, line 26, page 37, line 30, and page 306, line 2, *for* Germigny-les-Prés *read* Germigny-des-Prés.

Page 46, line 26, *for* 1093 *read* 1098.

Page 362, line 13, *for* twelfth *read* tenth.

PART I

THE ORIGINS OF FRENCH ROMANESQUE ARCHITECTURE AND SCULPTURE

ROMANESQUE FRANCE

CHAPTER I

ART AND THE EARLY CHURCH

Christianity in the course of its long history has inspired monuments and works of art that mark various stages in the evolution of religious symbols and ideas. Architecture, sculpture, mosaics, painting—these things we regard as the natural possessions of the Church, a heritage from the past to which she has added new and inestimable values. But this easy view is far from giving us the true measure of a long and complicated process. So far from art being the natural heritage of the Church, it is nearer the truth to say that, in view of the spiritual heredity of the Christian religion, it is a surprise that Christian art ever came into being. Its existence, and existence moreover in forms of supreme beauty, is one measure of the many vast compromises made by the Church with the Pagan world over which it established itself. At first sight, no religion would appear to offer more sterile ground for æsthetic development. The Jews, as a race, were thoroughly hostile to plastic art. The Mosaic Law was permeated by a horror of idolatry and graven images—one feature at least of Jewish tradition that some of the Christian Fathers were to adopt and make their own. Christianity had at its birth only a moral principle. In the evangelical teaching of the gospels, questions of ritual never arise. Jesus of Nazareth laid no stress on the necessity for temples or places set aside for worship. He taught a spiritual relationship between God and man, all exacting in its demands on the individual soul, but wholly independent of special localities and ritual observance. Paganism surrounded its oracles and idols with gorgeous trappings, but the Sermon on the Mount was

in no way concerned with the cult of a localised deity. "Neither on this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem," but where men worship in spirit and in truth, there the Master would be present among His disciples. The Kingdom was not to be of this world; the Apostles who hoped to sit in glory to the right hand and the left had to learn through poverty, persecution and failure the vain illusion of such dreams. Though the value of congregational worship was recognised, Christ discouraged exhibitions of prayer in the Temple, and advised that man should commune with God within his own chamber. St. Paul is haunted by the same set of ideas. Tactful though his sermon on the Areopagus to the audience of half mocking, half hostile Greeks is, hatred for the idols surrounding him breathes in every word. "God does not dwell in temples made by hands," asserts this austere and learned Jew, as he stands in full view of the Acropolis, with its supreme examples of classic art. All that Athens has to offer in the splendour of her temples and her sculpture is to him not only a sealed book but worse, pagan abominations destructive to the spirit of true religion. So uncompromising an attitude would have been fatal to the evolution of Christian art had it been maintained in its original rigours. But circumstances led to profound modifications taking place, that revolutionised the position.

Considerable obscurity overhangs the Church during the first three centuries A.D. Its geographical distribution, however, is very suggestive. To judge the story in right perspective, we must free our minds from the overwhelming ascendancy of Rome, an ascendancy due to her supreme position in religious matters at a later date. It is a mistake to imagine that the Church was built up purely on a classical and Western foundation. The part played by Rome and by classical tradition was less important in the early days than the part played by the East and Oriental influence. Syria was the headquarters of the new faith, and its first successes outside Jerusalem were won among the Greek-speaking communities of Asia Minor and of Egypt at places like Antioch, Nisibis, Edessa, and in Alexandria. Antioch, the third city in the Roman Empire, was already

an important Jewish centre when the Book of the Acts was written. There were Jews in Antioch from the time of its foundation by Seleucus Nikator in the third century B.C. Antioch was the scene of the first Christian Church founded outside Jerusalem, and subsequently had a patriarch. It was a flourishing Christian centre in the second century A.D. No less important was Alexandria, where Christianity took root at an early date, about A.D. 70. This great Hellenised city, near the Canopic mouth of the Nile, itself the heir to the age-long tradition of Egyptian culture, was a seat of learning destined to render vital services to Christian art and Christian theology.

We know that the stream of conversion flowed slowly westward, and that small Christian communities, probably Greek speaking, were established in Rome during apostolic times. But we are apt to forget the second great stream that flowed, not to the West, but to the East, from Syria to Mesopotamia, Armenia, and Persia. Edessa* and Nisibis† in Mesopotamia are forgotten names today, but they were flourishing cities in the first and second centuries of the Christian era. Armenia and Persia welcomed the new faith in a very different spirit from that of the Roman Empire. There was little love lost between the Persians and the Romans, and the one nation was apt to favour what the other disliked. Christian churches and schools of theology not only flourished, but were tolerated by the State in Mesopotamia, Persia, and Armenia when the hand of persecution rested heavily on the Christian communities in the West. The countries bordering on the Black Sea and the districts

* Edessa was built on the site of an old Assyrian town. In 132 B.C. a line of native kings established themselves there, and among their descendants was Abgar, who was converted to Christianity in the first century A.D. The Syriac version of the Bible was made at Edessa about A.D. 180, and there was a large Christian community there at that time. Addai, one of the seventy-two disciples was buried in the church which was built there.

† Nisibis was an ancient city founded by the Assyrians. The kings of Armenia held it from 150 B.C. to about A.D. 14. Many Jews lived there, and Christianity was introduced when the city became Roman. Nisibis as a frontier city had also many Persian residents. In the reign of Jovian it passed into the hands of the Persians, and had a Jacobite bishop early in the fourth century.

of Southern Russia were christianised from this Eastern source. It has been asserted that vaulted churches appeared in Armenia and other parts of Asia Minor as early as the fourth century, and admittedly such churches were in existence during the sixth and seventh centuries. The origin of the vaulted church is a bone of fierce contention among archæologists. It raises the whole great question of " Orient oder Rom " of which Strzygowski is the brilliant champion—the supremacy of the East rather than of Rome in the evolution of Christian doctrine and architecture. No less important, according to Strzygowski, was the influence of Persian or, as it is called, Iranian art on the evolution of Christian ornament. Without adopting the extreme views put forward by the champions either of East or West, it is essential to recognise that from the first a dual stream watered the growth of the infant Church both in art and theology. It is incontestable that Iranian design—a non-representational art of flat bands, scrolls, and monsters—entered into Christian art alongside the representational figure sculpture of the Greeks. The new faith was no less coloured by the outlook of the Syrians, a gifted Semitic people whose symbolism and hieratic forms influenced ritual; as their tradition of Sumerian, Babylonian, Hittite, and Assyrian ornament influenced the new iconography. Principles drawn from these three sources, Hellenic, Syrian, Iranian, were gathered up by the Roman Empire of the East after the Peace of the Church in 313, and became vital elements in the art known as Byzantine.

The culture and learning of Asia Minor belong to the past. Throughout the Near East the Turk has made a desolation without any pretence of peace. Great cities, formerly centres of civilisation, have been blotted out without leaving a trace of their existence. Ephesus and Antioch are today as Naishapur and Babylon. Hence the effort of imagination necessary to appreciate their influence over the infant Church at this remote date. Luckily matters in the West took another course. Italy, though ravaged by Barbarians, was to escape the obliterating hand of the Turk laid on the Græco-Oriental cities of the Near East. In

Rome the primitive Christian art preserved for us in the Catacombs throws a flood of light on early Christian worship. Here we can trace the first steps in the great change that led from the simplicity of the early Gospel teaching to the formalism and grandeur of the Church.

Christianity did not appear in Rome with any flourish of trumpets. It is almost certain that the first converts were either Egyptian slaves or humble folk of Jewish extraction speaking Greek. It was for a long time an obscure sect—one of the many Oriental religions contending for a place in the life of the capital. Oriental influences had swept into Rome before the Christian era. The cult of Isis was common in the second century B.C. It was against that background that the new faith developed. The old religion of Numa had broken down, and men's minds were turning with growing persistence to the mystery, symbolism, and emotion of Eastern cults. Christianity in its early days was only one among other new religions struggling for ascendancy in Rome. Isis, Magna Mater, Mithras, Cybele, all made their appeal. Mithras, indeed, was the pet aversion of the Fathers of the Church, who regarded him as the most formidable of all competitors to be met and overthrown. It was by slow and painful steps alone that the Church won its way from contempt and persecution to a position of incredible triumph and ascendancy.

The Christians of the apostolic age appear to have been simple joyous people, meeting at any spot within doors or without for informal gatherings of praise and prayer. They were quite indifferent apparently to the Pagan taunts that they had neither a temple, an altar, nor the image of a God to worship. But the primitive idyll of the Church was bound to assume very different proportions as Christian doctrines spread over the Mediterranean basin. The atmosphere of Rome was far removed from that of Nazareth or Bethany. The Church to survive at all had to make its count with its Pagan surroundings, and above all with the Pagan tastes of its converts. As it adopted the Greek language and symbols Græco-Oriental in character, so it was forced, however reluctantly and slowly, to come to

terms with art. Occidental converts saturated in Græco-Roman anthropomorphism found the rarefied moral atmosphere of the new religion altogether too tenuous. The demand for concrete symbols of faith was irresistible. The Church bowed to the inevitable, called decorative art to its aid, and Christian sentiment found a Pagan expression, however decorously veiled. Old idols acquire a new sense in the hands of Christian artists trained in classical tradition, and Christian iconography starts on its long and varied history.

It is not a little significant that the pressure of Pagan symbolism and ideas led to a profound change in the whole idea of worship even when Latin Christianity was still a persecuted faith. Whatever privileges were enjoyed by Christian Churches within the Persian sphere of influence, no such tolerance was shown them by Rome. Disliked and distrusted by the Roman authorities as an anti-patriotic secret society, the early Christians took refuge in tombs for the better practice of their cult. Burial without the walls in subterranean galleries was practised on a large scale by the Romans. Wealthy Roman converts looked upon it as an honour to have a saint or martyr buried in their family vault, and this intricate system of underground passages became a natural refuge in times of persecution. Chapels dug out of the friable tufa came into being when the sarcophagus of a martyr gave special sanctity to the spot. The sarcophagus in turn became an altar on which the Great Sacrifice was offered. Prosperous Roman Christians as well as Pagans were often buried in marble or stone sarcophagi covered with carvings. Sometimes the decoration would be purely classical, sometimes Christian symbols and ideas would be introduced. Centuries later these beautiful works of art were rediscovered, and proved a source of inspiration to the mediæval sculptors at a moment when the classical tradition was in complete eclipse.

The vast ramifications of the Catacombs bring home to us the growth and development of the Christian community in Rome during the first three centuries. As places of worship they must have been about as unpleasant and as unsavoury as can well be conceived, and we can imagine

with what a sense of relief the Christian congregations must have emerged into the fresh air after the Peace of the Church. In certain ecclesiastical circles very definite views are at times expressed about primitive practice. We know, in fact, little or nothing about primitive practice, and very little about the Church before the fourth century. Dr. Headlam has commented dryly on the discomfort, not only physical but moral, which the modern Christian might have felt at witnessing a service in the Catacombs. We know that all ceremonial observance centred from the first round the Eucharist, but the evolution of the Mass in its present form was the work of centuries. As with art, so with ritual. Both were elaborated under conditions far removed from any known to the Apostles. Jesus of Nazareth made an uncompromising call to the realities of sacrifice and morality. But the stark spiritual adventure to which He summoned mankind was too hard for the overwhelming majority. It was easier to fall back on the familiar sacrificial view of the old religions; to make good any deficiencies in charity and the love of God by ritual observance, by ceremony, by offerings. Let us not judge human nature too hardly for the change of temper and feeling that came over the Christian community when the visions of the primitive Church had vanished. The ideal of the Founder was too high even for the apostolic age; remains too high for us to this day.

In any appreciation of the artistic and intellectual influences of the Early Church, it is important to bear in mind that the advent of Christianity synchronised with profound changes in the classical world, to which the new religion reacted in many ways. In every branch of human thought the old vats were empty, and new wine was stirring in new bottles. Fresh artistic forms had already arisen in response to these changes. We must be on our guard, therefore, from attributing to Christianity the sole motive force in a changed intellectual outlook that had already gathered momentum before the Peace of the Church. The old conceptions of philosophy and art had broken down as completely as the old conceptions of the State religion. The little wind that comes before the dawn was blowing

over the existing centres of civilisation round the Mediterranean basin. New ideas were colouring men's minds on all these great questions. In Alexandria metaphysics had entered on an important phase with Neoplatonism, and in art fresh conceptions were arising to fill the void left by the obvious exhaustion of classical ideals. Christianity itself, a vast potential force, coincided with this changed intellectual content, and as it gathered momentum absorbed both in art and theory many of the conceptions already abroad. The art of the victorious Church becomes the new Imperial art. Destiny was at work in her own mysterious way, and the curious may well ask whether it was by accident or by design that the worship of the Emperor—the man made God—precedes the worship of the God made Man. In a striking passage on the relation of Christian to Roman art, Mrs. Arthur Strong has pointed out* how the Emperor appears on the Arch of Constantine enthroned like a mediæval Christ. "The night has closed over the Pagan gods," she writes. "On the Arch of Constantine, the Emperor, unattended by local deities or allegorical figures, stands or sits, directly surrounded by his people. In presence of this conception we feel that we have reached the point where the imperial type will be adapted to the Central Figure of a new religion."

In art, as in nature, there is no jump, and so we pass from bas-reliefs of the Emperor among his Councillors to mediæval sculptures of Christ in Glory seated among the Elders of the Apocalypse. The first Christian centuries were years of profound modification of ideas all along the line, and in the Catacombs we can see the process at work in the very dawn of the Church's history.

Gloomy though the circumstances of a religion forced to worship among the dead were, the cheerfulness of the early Christians triumphed over their surroundings. A gay Pompeian school of painting had originated in Alexandria, and was a feature of contemporary Pagan art. The Romans decorated not only their houses but their

* "Roman Sculpture," p. 340. The Arch of Constantine was dedicated in gratitude for the victory over Maxentius, A.D. 312, a year before the Peace of the Church.

tombs with graceful Hellenistic designs, and the Pagan converts in this, as in other respects, made no real break with the traditions of the past. The Catacombs and later on the basilicas where the faithful met for worship were covered with frescoes and paintings in which the piety and joyousness of the Early Church found touching expression. Festoons of flowers and fruit, birds, vases, small groups of figures, are combined in a charming decorative whole. The iconography adopted was purely classical, but the artist sought to rob the old Pagan tales of immoral and unsuitable associations, and thus transformed presented them as Christian stories for the edification of the faithful. Symbolism soon makes its appearance. We find in the Catacombs a whole series of Pagan emblems transformed into Biblical legends and invested with a new meaning. The bird of Venus becomes the Dove of the Holy Spirit, Orpheus returned from the dead appears as the Good Shepherd, the coffer of Danaë floats again as Noah's Ark, Elijah rises to heaven in Pluto's chariot, while Andromeda's monster reappears as Jonah's whale. Animal symbols are common, among them the Fish—a precious emblem to the Christian, as its letters in Greek stand for the initials of Christ the Saviour—the Peacock (the emblem of immortality), the Dove, the Stag, and other symbols. The decoration of the Catacombs is the first step in the synthesis of ideas that is to mark Christian art throughout the centuries. Venerable, therefore, though Catholic tradition, behind it we catch sight of shadowy faiths still older. Catholic tradition loses none of its value from the fact that the Church transformed and moulded to her own use certain Pagan practices and customs themselves the expression of enduring elements in human consciousness. Her gorgeous rites have in them some echo of older and more primitive cults, and from the Oriental religions that surged into Rome at the beginning of the Empire, Christianity when elaborating her faith and ritual drew elements as important as from classical tradition.

Yet it is clear that this vast process of assimilation of ideas and symbols, Hellenic, Roman, and Oriental, did not pass without violent protest on the part of many of the

Fathers. From the days of Clement of Alexandria and St. Augustine to those of St. Bernard of Clairvaux we find the same protest constantly renewed. The fierce monotheistic spirit of the old Jewish faith with its ingrained detestation of idols breaks out over and over again. A strong undercurrent of hatred for Paganism and Pagan art remained an unchanging factor among the more fanatical spirits, especially a hatred for statuary which by its multiplication of graven images offended the fundamental principles both of the old Mosaic dispensation and the new. In the eighth century the Byzantine Empire was rent like a rag with the famous dispute over images. We owe it to the happy accident that the early successes of the Church were won among the cultured Græco-Roman races of the Mediterranean that art and learning found a place in the Christian organism. These races, as we have seen, in accepting the Gospel modified profoundly the simplicity of its original message. They imposed language, philosophy, theology, on the infant Church. The intellectual content is no longer that of the Lake of Galilee, but of the metaphysicians of Alexandria. Throughout the centuries, as I have said, one section of the Church never loses its profound distrust for the Paganism that had invaded it. But the Pagan idea of a House of the God, a definite Holy Place to be visited for purposes of prayer and ceremonial observances, becomes an essential condition of Christian worship. Further, the Holy Place will contain emblems and pictures designed to stir the reverence of the worshippers. All this is as the poles removed from the Master's words, "Neither on this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem." But it is entirely in line with the spirit of a cultured Paganism purged of its grosser elements.

The Edict of Milan, A.D. 313, known as Constantine's Peace of the Church, marks one of the great watersheds of history. Christianity emerges from the Catacombs no longer a persecuted sect but the official religion of the Empire.

The product ourselves of a Christianised Europe in which for centuries the Church was to be the dominant force, we take this great change as a matter of course. It is in

reality one of the most astounding and one of the most inexplicable events in history. What led to so bewildering a *volte face* on the part of the emperor? The hand of Diocletian (a great ruler be it said) rested heavily on the Christians from A.D. 284 till his death in 312. The Church triumphant very naturally made the most of these trials, but it is not necessary for us to exaggerate their severity. The Pagan persecution of Christianity was a small affair compared with the burnings and slaughterings that Christians have inflicted on each other. To paraphrase the immortal remark of the child, we may rest content that during the high-water mark of persecution there was many a poor lion who did not get a Christian.

The Roman State was essentially tolerant; a virtue that cannot be claimed for the Church in the days of its power. It left people to find their own way to Heaven, so long as they behaved like good citizens. But the Christian communities had certainly a unique power of rousing the ire of their Roman rulers, not, we may feel sure, on account of their religious beliefs, but from an attitude held to be subversive to the State. The divinity of the emperor was a symbol of the first importance to the Roman. To refuse the offering of a grain of incense at that shrine was to put yourself outside the pale of normal social and civic relationships. In Mr. Wells's "History of the World," there is a note by Professor Gilbert Murray that sums up the position in graphic words: "If you imagine a blend of pacifist international socialists with some mystical Indian sect drawing its supporters mainly from an oppressed and ill-liked foreign proletariat such as the 'hunky' population of some big American towns, full of the noblest moral professions but at the same time alien, or even hostile, to the whole established order of society, I think you will get the sort of impression that the Christian society made on a Roman."

It is easy to imagine the utter disgust with which the Roman aristocracy must have viewed the favour shown by the emperor to the Christians. Dinner-parties of Roman gentlemen of the die-hard type must have rung with denun-

ciations of Constantine and all his works.* That the Empire had gone to the devil fully and finally was a tragedy bewailed and lamented, we may feel sure, in no uncertain language by large sections of the governing class. Other sections had their own, if different, reasons for resenting the change. The brittle intellectual existed then as now, and despised both the fervour and the faith of the Church. The Christian point of view was thoroughly antipathetic to the cynical philosophy current in the fourth century, and the movement that culminated and failed in Julian the Apostate, proves the depth but, at the same time, the futility of the opposition excited by Constantine's action.

But if this or something like it was the attitude of the cultured Pagan world towards the Christians, what induced Constantine to make this momentous change? † It is clear that he himself was a monotheist, though not baptised a Christian till perhaps on his death-bed. The Christian communities were growing in power, and he may have had some glimpse of the great spiritual force of which the Church was the guardian. He may have discerned the coming disintegration of the Empire, and felt that here was a new principle that might weld society anew. And there must have been, too, the surprising testimony of the individual Christian life: joyous, gracious, unafraid in the face of death and persecution. For the spirit has never been without witness in the darkest moments of Christian history, and the power of the spirit within the heart of the humble saint has been the principle of life triumphing again and again over the follies and aberrations of formalists and theologians.

Whatever the cause, the fact is there, difficult though

* The type is a constant one throughout history. In the Stone Age, Flint Arrow, when sitting round the fire with his friends, undoubtedly railed at young Dolmen's behaviour, and lamented the good old times when Axe Hammer did things in such a different way.

† Sir Ernest Wallis Budge suggests to me that one of the explanations is to be found in the success of the Jews and Greeks as traders. It was for this reason that Ezana of Ethiopia made his kingdom Christian. All the rich merchants from the first to the fourth centuries were Jews and Greeks and Christians.

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we may find it to explain. The idyll of the Church is over; the day of temporal power begins.

Theological disputes were in full blast at the moment when the Church emerged as a favoured and victorious corporation. The Fathers were tearing each other to pieces over heresies that turned on the smallest letter of the Greek alphabet. Constantine presided at the Council of Nicea in 325. The picture of the emperor listening to the dispute between Arius and Athanasius (Arius had his ears soundly boxed by a brother theologian during the Conference) helps us to realise some measure of the transformation that had come over the world.

This radical change in the status of the Church led to changes no less profound in doctrine, in ritual, and in art. It is far beyond the province of this chapter to attempt to draw even in broadest outline the amazing history of the Church—a history which, in its chances, vicissitudes, and strange successes has no parallel in human experience. Far afield though I have wandered from France, I am only concerned to sketch some rudimentary historical background as a setting for her abbeys and churches. And this is necessary because centuries later certain influences and ideas that sprang up in these early days found fresh expression in mediæval architecture. The question of church building, for instance, carries us back to the very beginning of Christian worship.

We saw how the Catacombs sheltered the first Christian congregations, and the peculiar sanctity that attached to the burial place of a saint or martyr. But churches in the sense of special places set apart for worship began at an early date. Addai, as we saw, built one at Edessa in the first century and was buried in it. They existed during the second century, and were numerous by the end of the third. Definite information is lacking as to whether or not these modest buildings were designed on any particular plan. Prior to the fourth century, naturally they did not seek to thrust themselves on the attention of hostile Pagan communities. After A.D. 313 the position was wholly different, and churches sprang up in every part of the Empire. The churches from the first half of the

fourth century were built on what is known as the basilican plan, and this plan transmitted across the centuries with many modifications formed the basis of the mediæval abbeys and cathedrals. Churches with cupolas superseded basilicas in the Eastern Empire after the sixth century, but though churches with cupolas were built at a later date in Italy and France, their numbers were relatively small. The basilican plan triumphed in the West and became the standard type of ecclesiastical architecture. Much difference of opinion has existed among scholars as to the origin of Christian basilicas. It is clear that they were in no way derived from the existing Roman temples, buildings altogether too small for the new worship. The term basilica was applied by the Romans to an oblong building divided by columns into three or more aisles, the central division being higher than the sides. The building was finished by an apse at one end and an open court or atrium at the other. The civil basilicas of the Romans were used for the conduct of public affairs. They were frequently halls of justice, and the apse, which in course of time became the sanctuary enshrining the altar, was originally the seat of the magistrate. Large halls of much the same character were sometimes attached to the houses of wealthy Romans, and the early Christian churches appear to have been modelled on private rather than public basilicas. Be that as it may, the main lines of the type, however evolved, have persisted ever since.

Meanwhile, other great forces had been set in motion. From the fourth century onwards the world as known to the early Cæsars becomes a changed place. Constantine did more than give place and status to the Christian religion. He transferred the seat of the Empire in A.D. 330 from Rome to the old Greek settlement of Byzantium on the Bosphorus. Here he founded the new and splendid capital that bore his name. The two events clearly are connected. Constantine had broken with tradition in recognising the Church. That break in tradition was emphasised and driven home by the Imperial desertion of Rome. Gravitation eastwards had begun before the end of the third century, when the Emperor

Diocletian set up his capital at Nicomedia. The transfer of the capital in A.D. 330 hastened the process of the division of the Empire into the two halves of East and West. Though reunited for a time by the Emperor Theodosius, the cleavage subsequently became definite, and Byzantium rose in power and status, as the intellectual as well as the Imperial centre. At a crucial moment, both art and theology passed under Oriental influence. The first original art evolved after the Peace of the Church was the Imperial Art of the Eastern capital, derived not from Rome but from the Græco-Oriental cities of Alexandria, Ephesus, and Antioch. In 334 we find Constantine complaining bitterly that he had searched Rome in vain for architects to take charge of the work in his new capital. Two centuries later the architects who were to build Santa Sophia came to Constantinople, not from Rome, but from Asia Minor. Similarly, it is in the East at Nicea, Ephesus, and Chalcedon that the great Œcumenical Councils were held at which the Church elaborated her dogmas. From the East, too, came the first great heresies.

Rome, distracted by faction and the first inroads of the Barbarians, had little share in this great evolution of ideas. It was a dark hour for classical tradition. In A.D. 40 the seat of the Western Empire was transferred from Rome by the Emperor Honorius, and Ravenna became the capital of Italy for the next 350 years. Under Theodoric the Goth and his successors the city of the marshes was the refuge of culture and learning in the West. " Latinity " was exhausted for the time being in its place of birth. True, the classical tradition in Rome remains unbroken, as also the unbroken tradition of the Latin Church. The absence of the emperors was the opportunity of the popes, and the Papacy struck firm roots in Roman soil during years of chaos. But from the sixth to the eighth centuries Rome herself fell largely under Oriental influences. After the conquest of Italy by Justinian the old capital of the Cæsars was the seat of a Byzantine duke; a provincial city, no longer *the* city. No less than thirteen popes of Greek or Syrian origin occupied the throne of St. Peter after the seventh century. Ravenna, always in close touch with the

Eastern Empire, was impregnated by Byzantine influences, and she became the bridge over which a traffic of ideas and objects flowed from East to West. Her magnificent churches, happily still preserved, are priceless examples of the new art that was in a special sense a creation of the Early Church—glass mosaic with its gorgeous blues and greens and golds as distinct from the marble mosaic of antique times.

The Western Empire collapsed finally in A.D. 476. After that date Byzantium became the guardian and heir of the traditions of a nobler age. From the first the spirit of the Orient overshadowed Constantine's city, situated geographically at the gate of the East, as it never shadowed Greece or Rome. In drawing nearer to the formal and despotic kingdoms of Asia, the Roman Empire of the East seems to absorb a large measure of their formality and despotism. Yet Byzantium carried in her breast another and a different set of principles—the great Hellenic ideas that are the eternal source of our knowledge and intellectual emancipation. Two rival traditions met in Byzantine art: the Hellenic tradition of life and freedom; the Oriental tradition of formality and absolute monarchy. Byzantine art, in fact, registers very accurately the struggle of these two ideals. The immediate upshot was defeat for the Hellenic principle. The world was no longer moving in the values of the old Greek spirit, sane, serene, positive. In Renan's expressive phrase, "le monde s'attristait." Man had become occupied with questions concerning the salvation of his soul. Speculations about death and judgment would have been looked upon by the contemporaries of Pericles as futile and ridiculous. But mysticism and emotion turned for expression to the cults of the East and to art in harmony with them. It was a losing battle all along the line for the old Pagan ideal, with its clarity and lack of other-worldliness. Many centuries were to elapse before the Greek spirit comes to its own again and reasserts values long obscure.

Meanwhile, in the course of the struggle waged, we see the Oriental spirit seizing and freezing the free Hellenic figures, once instinct with life and beauty, but grown

monotonous through too facile repetition. They are replaced by the school of painting and decoration we know as Byzantine. Byzantium inherited from Greece its love of beauty, but still more dominant in the minds of the Eastern emperors was the idea of despotic monarchy. The Eastern Empire faced, not Hellas, but looked across mountain and desert to the traditions of Assyria and Babylon. Its great rival was the Sassanian kingdom in Persia. Hence a progressive orientation of ideas to the luxury and symbolism of Oriental art as exalting the power of the monarch. Hence the great development under Byzantine rule of luxury arts concerned with ivories, enamels, jewels, metal work, and textiles.* "The Byzantines, moved by the reviving spirit of Egypt, Syria, and Mesopotamia, were more alive (than the ancient Greeks and Romans) to the quality of the medium, and perhaps weary of Hellenistic facility of technique. They treated hard stone with a sense of its texture, and Proconnesan marble in a new manner, produced an art of coinage based on a true appreciation of gold, brought out the essential character of ivory, conceived an imperial use of plate, gems and jewellery adapted to the new ceremonial, and rivalled the permanent and passing beauties of jewels, fruit, and flowers, with their enamels, silks, combinations of coloured stones and pastes, wall mosaics, miniature mosaics, and illuminated manuscripts almost surpassing jewels in brilliancy."†

Mosaics were brought to a high state of perfection and splendour, but sculpture enters on a more chequered career. It is often stated that sculpture had no place in Byzantine art, but this is a misconception due to some confusion of dates with the Iconoclast period. During the Golden Age sculpture flourished at Byzantium, and though the bulk of it has perished, noble fragments extant at Rome and Venice and in the museums of Milan, Ravenna, Alexandria, and Cairo give us some measure of its quality. True there were hostile influences. Certain Fathers of the Church

* The process is admirably summed up by Messrs. Peirce and Tyler in their valuable publication on Byzantine Art.

† "Byzantine Art," by Hayford Peirce and Royall Tyler.

frowned on statuary. It was associated in their minds with too many heathen customs and Pagan gods. In matters of art the Church has often spoken with an uncertain or divided voice, and, as we shall see, during the twelfth century, Suger of St. Denis and Bernard of Clairvaux are as trumpets blowing discordant notes. But painting and mosaic, as mediums through which Bible stories and legends could be taught, never fell under ecclesiastical ban and remained in high favour. The arts practised in the Byzantine Empire drew their themes from many and various sources, Oriental influences always being dominant. The craftsmen of a later date, described in a subsequent chapter, were to give new and wonderful expression to the models thus collected.

Christianity, in becoming the official religion of the Empire, underwent naturally a profound transformation. Her art no less than her doctrine became formal. By the end of the fourth century a great change had taken place. The serene and gracious imagery of the Catacombs yields place to hieratic symbolism. The note of joyousness is replaced by something more solemn, more formal. The bearded Christ of the mosaics—purely an Oriental type—supersedes the youthful Apollo of the Catacombs deriving from quite another tradition. The clarity and directness of the classical mind gives way before the mystery and suggestion of the East. Didactic and historical teaching appears in painting and mosaic. Instead of the Good Shepherd, a pastoral figure among the lambs, we have the Judge weighing the salvation or damnation of souls. The terrors of the Last Day rather than the joys of Paradise take possession of a faith that has become the handmaid of emperors. There are no paintings of the Passion in the Catacombs. Even the Cross is only suggested by a sign. But during the fourth century pictorial art is called upon to symbolise the great mysteries of the faith. Representations of the Eucharist, the Passion, the Apocalypse, are frequent. The Cross, after the pilgrimage of St. Helena (Constantine's mother) to Jerusalem, becomes a symbol in general use. The Council of Ephesus in A.D. 431 proclaimed the Divine Motherhood of Mary, and after that

date she takes her place as a great figure in painting and mosaic. Ceremonies become elaborate, gorgeous, hierarchical. The Eucharist, originally a commemorative rite, evolves more and more on sacrificial lines. Perhaps it is not always recognised that some elements which enter into the central and most sacred point of Christian doctrine go back to the dawn of history. As early as the days of Cheops the ritual observances attached to the sacred funeral meal were held in awe and reverence by the ancient Egyptians, and in a more material sense than ever contemplated by the author of the Fourth Gospel. Pagan religions were concerned with the presence of the god under material forms of eating and drinking, and the " making divine " that it was held resulted from such rites.

Another new and powerful force arises—namely, monasticism. It may be that the ancient religion of Egypt, concerned as it was with life beyond the grave, paved the way in Egypt for ready acceptance of the Christian faith. Certainly among the races of the Mediterranean basin Christianity spread nowhere more rapidly than in the Nile Valley. It early assumed an ascetic form. Anchorites were numerous in the desert by the end of the third century or early in the fourth century. Anthony, an Egyptian (died *circa* A.D. 360), was the founder of monasticism. He was preceded by a great ascetic known as Paule, and followed by a more famous disciple, Pachomius, who established a fraternity of monks near Denderah.

Few movements were to have consequences more profound. The monastic idea spread from Egypt to Syria, thence to Asia Minor, and soon reached Italy. At the beginning of the sixth century a man of genius, St. Benedict, welded into one disciplined whole the tentative monastic practices that had gone before, and elaborated a rule, the influence of which can scarcely be exaggerated.

We shall hear a great deal later on in this book about Benedictine monks and monasteries, for it is the Benedictine Order first and foremost that left its impress on Church architecture during the early Middle Ages.

Looking back over the sum total of these things, we can appreciate the magnitude of the change that has come to

pass. We are conscious of a great gain in power and magnificence. But we have lost not only the clarity of the classical spirit, but the joyousness and profound simplicity of the early Gospel. The intellectual temper abroad is more formal, more rigid. History teaches us that at a given moment we have to be grateful for any port in a storm. But for the rigid organism established the Church might have succumbed before the blows that now fell in heavy succession upon the dissolving Empire of the Cæsars.

The fifth century is *par excellence* the age of the Barbarian invasions, the *Völkerwanderung*, whose movements extinguished the last embers of the old classical civilisation. It is a melancholy period when the bulwarks of Rome go down one by one. Franks, Huns, Goths, ravaged the Western world. In the mysterious order of things, the moment had arrived apparently for a fundamental change. But if Mediterranean civilisation had grown effete, the evolution of a new order was a development bought at a heavy price. In the fifth century the Franks crossed the Rhine and established themselves in the country which bears their name. The first Frankish kings, known as the Merovingians, are of importance to the story of French Romanesque, for during this period first primitive attempts at church building and decoration begin in Gaul that were to lead up to the triumphs of mediæval as distinct from classical architecture. Europe as a whole presents at this time a sorry spectacle—a welter of confusion and destruction. The Barbarians were engaged in their task, conscious or unconscious, of obliterating frontiers and setting up new nations. Subsequently the Lombard invaders, like the Goths, fell under the influence of Latin civilisation, and their settlement in North Italy was to have important consequences for art. But the eagles have fallen and the darkness deepens perceptibly for centuries before even the approach of dawn is foreshadowed.

CHAPTER II

THE CAROLINGIAN RENAISSANCE AND THE BIRTH OF ROMANESQUE

Much obscurity hangs over the history of primitive Christianity in France. Gaul, conquered originally by Julius Cæsar, had become a model Roman province—prosperous, contented, civilised. Throughout the days of the Empire, Gaul was not only the first but the most faithful of the daughter states. The Gallic tribes assimilated Roman institutions and Roman culture with great ease. Commerce and agriculture flourished no less than literature and art. So famous were the schools of the Rhone Valley that students crossed the Alps to study rhetoric in Gaul. In no part of the Empire had Roman rule brought a larger measure of peace and culture. Magnificent public buildings adorned the towns. Enough remains today of the aqueducts, the amphitheatres, the baths of a golden age, to enable us to measure the wealth and prosperity of those who built them. Constantine, when in search of a new capital, had, it is said, Arles under consideration as an alternative to Byzantium, a fact that proves the status of Gaul in the Roman world. The extinction of learning and culture is a tragic experience wherever encountered in history, and the stages that mark the fall of the Empire were nowhere more melancholy than in this favoured province, where Rome had struck her roots deep in congenial soil.

We know nothing of the first Christian missionaries in Gaul, but we may rest assured that here as elsewhere they were obscure people either ignored or despised by the Gallo-Romans. Some Catholic writers, inspired by a spirit of faith more lively than that of criticism, have claimed an apostolic foundation for the first Christian missions in Gaul. Monsieur Lenthéric, for instance, in an

erudite volume, "Les Villes Mortes du Golfe du Lyon," devotes a somewhat surprising chapter to the story of Les Trois Maries and accepts as a matter of history, not of legend, the landing near Arles of Lazarus and the family from Bethany. But the beliefs of the faithful, however sincere, do not constitute historical evidence, and history, so far from confirming the testimony of legend in this matter, is all in the contrary sense. If, indeed, Christianity spread at an early date throughout the Western Mediterranean, it penetrated relatively late into Gaul. There is no Christian inscription of a certain date before A.D. 334.* The first Christian settlements were formed apparently in the Rhone Valley at Vienne, Lyons, and Arles, and they were prosperous communities at the date of their persecution by Marcus Aurelius. Undaunted by these trials, a further Christian mission to Central France was undertaken in the third century. After Constantine's Peace of the Church in the fourth century the whole position of Christianity was revolutionised in Gaul as elsewhere. The great mission of St. Martin of Tours brought the Gospel to Central France in the fourth century. But two hundred years later the struggle against Paganism was still being waged in the basin of the Loire, and north of that river, heathen rites were not uprooted till the seventh century. Clearly, therefore, it is not to France that we must look for evidence as to the origins of Christian architecture. Monsieur de Lasteyrie is of opinion that no Christian church in any country prior to the reign of Constantine survives. In view of the Christian persecutions, any such survival would have been very extraordinary. But the nave of the church at Bethlehem dates from Constantine, and there are basilicas at Rome that go back to the same period, however much refashioned in the course of years. In Syria, Tunis, Algiers, fragments of basilicas still exist that were built between the fifth and eighth centuries. The magnificences of Ravenna also belong to the sixth century. Throughout the Byzantine Empire, including Africa and Syria, many churches were built

* At Lyons (Lasteyrie, "Architecture Religieuse en France à l'Époque Romane," p. 5).

prior to the confusion that set in with the Arab conquests of the seventh century. Some of these churches are extant in a state not too fragmentary to make some reconstruction of their original plan possible. Syrian architecture in particular was remarkable for the originality and fineness of its work. To the confusion of many archæologists, churches were built in Syria during this early period that in no small measure anticipated the developments of Romanesque architecture six or seven centuries later. The seductive question of origins is full of pitfalls. It is always fatally easy to find ingenious and far-fetched solutions for the similarities and coincidences that occur in architecture and art. The explanation that similar needs and similar conditions produce very much the same results among sensible and intelligent people all the world over, is more prosaic than the introduction of the hard-worked Phœnicians in classical times, and the no less hard-worked Crusaders during the Middle Ages. Candid travellers must guard themselves against this foible, as also a tendency to regard monuments as older than they are—a tendency varied now and again by the affectation that postdates every building.

We saw at the end of the last chapter how the Franks and Germanic tribes crossed the Rhine and established themselves in France between the Somme and the Loire. Clovis, who became their king in 481, had married a Christian princess full of zeal for the faith. Clovis, being hard put to it in a battle against some other Barbarian tribe, determined to give the Christian God a trial. Provided that victory rested with the Franks, he too would worship Christ. The enemy was duly routed, and Clovis was as good as his word. Not only was he baptised with thousands of his men, but his subsequent career was marked by all the zeal of the convert. He earned the title of Most Christian King, made Paris his capital, and did much to create a powerful Frankish kingdom. This tradition of devotion to the Church was carried on by his successor. But no churches of the Gallo-Roman and early Merovingian periods survive in France in spite of the piety of the Merovingian kings and their numerous foundations.

Little is left prior to the ninth century. Indeed, owing to Norman devastations and the general insecurity of life and property, there are few buildings extant prior to the eleventh century. The mania for change and for self-destruction that has desolated France throughout the ages is an unhappy circumstance deplored in bitter language by her own archæologists. Owing to it France, unfortunately, is not rich in primitive churches. The walls of St. Pierre, Vienne, in all probability, date from the fifth century. At Vienne accordingly we must look for the oldest surviving fragment of a Christian church in France. The curious and interesting Baptistry of St. Jean at Poitiers and the crypts of Jouarre and of St. Laurent at Grenoble date from the seventh century. These few buildings are all that remain of the religious foundations of the Merovingian rulers.

We know, however, from the testimony of Gregory of Tours and from other writers, that the Merovingian churches built in Gaul between the fifth and the eighth centuries were costly and numerous. The religious fervour of the Frankish kings led to a stimulation of architecture. Piety was the dominant note of princes and people in the intervals of their internecine and other struggles. Some of the most celebrated churches in France were raised at a later date on the original foundations of a Merovingian prince. Thus, Ste. Geneviève at Paris was founded by Clovis, Germigny-les-Prés by Childebert, St. Omer at Rouen by Clotaire I. The Merovingian kings were conspicuous for the piety and superstition that often marks an age of violence. Clerical influence was very strong, and, as always happens in times of confusion, the monastic life made a great appeal. The number of monastic establishments set up in France at this time was very large. It is probable that these Merovingian churches were built on the lines of the Roman basilica. They must have lacked, however, any architectural distinction. Architecture had fallen on evil days, and these buildings, though immensely admired by their contemporaries, sought to conceal the essential weakness of their structure by decoration of a gorgeous character. The exteriors were quite simple, but the interiors were

apparently a blaze of mosaics, paintings, and goldsmith's work. Stained glass of some kind was already in use, though its exact nature is a puzzle to archæologists.

An age incapable of fine workmanship in stone and marble laid itself out to exploit the talents of better men than themselves. Wholesale pilfering went on of classical remains. Capitals and columns, sculptures and marbles, were imported from Italy and the East. How these bulky articles were shifted in an age of primitive transport is a real mystery, for, granted an unlimited supply of forced labour, the difficulties must have been formidable. Whatever they were, it is equally clear they were surmounted. This second-hand material was more or less clumsily adapted by the Merovingian architects. The Emperor Julian, like latter-day governments, had attempted by edicts to check the sale and exportation of classical objects, but after the Pagan temples fell into disuse and the Barbarian invasions had led to the destruction of many public monuments, the whole export movement naturally gained in momentum. It was to these ruins that a degraded craftsmanship turned in order to make good the deficiencies of its own technique. Fire must have been a potent cause of destruction among churches thus constructed and adorned. Vaulting in stone was an art quite beyond the powers of the architects of the period. Wood roofing was therefore universal, and there is abundant evidence of the conflagrations to which it led.

Until the sixth century churches were built on much the same plan in both branches of the Roman Empire. After that date architecture assumed a wholly different aspect in the East from what persisted in the West. The church vaulted with cupolas becomes the usual type in the countries forming part of the Byzantine Empire. But in the West the basilical plan never loses its hold—an interesting proof of the tenacity of Roman tradition. On no province, as we have seen, more than on Gaul had Rome left the mark of her temper and her genius. The classical tradition in Southern France was never wholly extinguished, and even during the eclipse of the Dark Ages some embers still smouldered of the old Roman fire.

During the seventh and eighth centuries the decadence of Europe was complete. The opening of the eighth century is perhaps the darkest point in the Dark Ages. Invasion had come from the south no less than from the north. Throughout the breadth of the Mediterranean basin races were staggering under the blows of Islam. The Arab conquests had overwhelmed Persia, Syria, Egypt, Roman Africa, Sicily, and Spain. France, menaced by the host of Abdurrahman, owed her salvation to the famous victory of Charles Martel at Tours in A.D. 732, and the flood was stayed so far as Western Europe was concerned. But the moral and intellectual confusion of the age was complete. The mind of man rocked no less than seats of government. Learning was at its lowest ebb, and the age debased by the grossest superstitions concerned with the worship of images and holy pictures. A moment of such peril strikes us as peculiarly inappropriate for a theological squabble, but while the Empire tottered, ecclesiastics tore each other to pieces. The fanatical strain in the Orthodox Church reasserted itself violently, thanks to the presence on the throne of a Puritan emperor, Leo the Isaurian, bent on a great purge. The famous Iconoclast dispute, therefore, added itself to the many troubles of the world. The pope and the Western Church, no less than the Lombard kings, were ardent upholders of image worship, and a desperate feud raged on the subject between Rome and Byzantium. The emperor and his Iconoclast followers made short work of the images in Byzantium, and crowds of outraged worshippers took refuge in Italy, in many cases bringing the objects of their adoration with them. This feud reacted on art in more than one direction. The Oriental influences to which I made frequent reference in the last chapter, continued to pour into Western Europe century after century from the East, and had strange and unexpected reactions on both art and architecture.

Few matters in connection with early Christian art are more engrossing than the strange animals that haunted the imagination of the illuminators of the Dark Ages—animals that were to find their way at a later date on to the capitals and carvings of Romanesque columns. Birds and beasts

of Oriental origin had replaced saints and martyrs in the decoration of Eastern churches, and we can in some measure gauge the astonishing infiltration of ideas that went on between remote parts of Europe and Asia when we find these same animals reaching the Irish illuminators from quite another source.

Great art had come to a complete standstill at this period, but missal painting, on the other hand, had reached a high degree of perfection. The Merovingians during the eighth century experimented with spirals, zigzags, and *entrelacs* : also with animals such as lions, parrots, peacocks, etc. Jewels and ivories from the East and the textiles sold by Syrian merchants contributed to the themes in vogue. In Western Europe classical foundations, though overlaid, were never wholly destroyed. But Oriental influences penetrated the countries even on the Atlantic seaboard, and reappeared in the most unexpected quarters.

Across the darkness falls a ray of light emanating from Britain and Ireland. Early Irish culture is a great mystery. No real answer is forthcoming to the many problems it presents. St. Patrick's mission took place about the middle of the fifth century, and is generally regarded as the starting-point of Irish religious history. The monastic system introduced by St. Patrick spread rapidly through the island. In the last chapter we saw how monasticism originated in Egypt and was carried on under very ascetic forms by the Egyptian Christians known as Copts. The rigours of the early system were modified somewhat by St. Benedict in the rule that became dominant in Italy and spread from Italy to Western Europe. But the Coptic monks still adhered to their own practices. Gaul in the fifth century was full of monasteries, and these monasteries were in touch with the Coptic monasteries in Egypt. The relationship need cause us no surprise on the score of geographical distance. Throughout the Dark no less than the Middle Ages, we are made to realise time after time how much more people travelled than seems credible, communication being what it was. Now St. Patrick received his monastic training in Gaul, and his missionaries came from that country. Further, he spent some years at the

great monastic school at the Lerins monastery (opposite Cannes), and it is very suggestive to hear that Coptic monks formed part of that community. It is clear that the monastic life brought subsequently by St. Patrick to Ireland was of the primitive ascetic type in which he had been himself trained. Some archæologists think that the Irish monasteries may have remained in touch with Coptic ideas—possibly through the intermediary of Gaul—and through the Copts they were brought in contact with Syrian influence. Here at least we lay hands on a clue to the otherwise inexplicable appearance of Oriental decoration in the wonderful Irish illuminated manuscripts and the carved stones of the period.*

It is not possible to tread surely or speak with certainty in a maze of conjecture so dark. Inferences drawn from isolated facts are often at fault, because other facts that would correct or upset them are lacking. Similarities can be noted, but it is hazardous to raise too great a weight of superstructure on the frail foundations available. This reservation made, a curious passage in the "Golden Ass" of Apuleius is not without interest in view of the suspected relationship between Egypt and Ireland. Apuleius lived in the second century A.D. and travelled extensively in Africa as well as Asia. In the eleventh book of the "Golden Ass" there is an elaborate description of his initiation into the rites of Isis. The initiate is shown the mysteries of Heaven and Hell: then the story goes on to say that the High Priest of Isis "drew forth from the sacred recesses of the shrine certain books written in unknown characters, partly represented in compendious form the words expressive of their meaning by figures of animals of every kind, and partly fortified against the inquisitive perusal of the profane by characters wreathed like knots and twisting round in the shape of a wheel, and

* In his recent book, "The Origin of Christian Church Art," Strzygowski places side by side an illustration of the Nigg Stone found in Ross-shire—a typical specimen of Irish carving—and one of a frieze at Deir-es Suryani in Egypt. No one could fail to be struck by the general resemblance in feeling and design between these two carvings, one from the north of Scotland, the other from Lower Egypt.

with extremities twining one with another like the tendrils of a vine."

The passage, as it stands, is almost an exact description of the knots and coils and twisted, etiolated animals that decorate the Book of Kells. Is it possible that this sort of illumination lived on in the tradition of Egypt and crossed the seas at a later date ?

Be that as it may, the Anglo-Saxon and Irish missions throughout Europe from the sixth to the eighth centuries were of great importance. By the strangest of racial and religious paradoxes, they kept alive some flickering embers of culture when the light of learning was all but extinguished. The relations maintained during the Dark Ages between Egypt and the monasteries of Western Europe had many reactions in Ireland. Strange and monstrous animals appear in the pages of the Irish missal painters as well as Coptic ornaments of the seventh, eighth, and ninth centuries. The famous Book of Kells is permeated by Oriental influences. The art that died out in Ireland grafted on to the Continental stock had endless consequences. No page in the history of learning is more extraordinary than the part played by England and Ireland at this period of confusion in keeping intact the tradition of classical antiquity. It was the Irish and Anglo-Saxon influence that stirred the tradition into life again during the Carolingian period in France and Germany. Latinity and the classical tradition were utterly suspect in the homes of their birth. But for the monks in Ireland and England, Latin was only a language of the Church. It had no association to them with Pagan ideas, their own Celtic Paganisms having taken quite other forms. Hence the strange accident of a Latin revival proceeding from the monasteries of Ireland and of Great Britain, expressing itself in most unclassical forms of ornament and designs inspired from Eastern models.

Though architecture and sculpture in Western Europe fell on evil days after the collapse of the Western Empire, happier conditions obtained in the Eastern Empire. At Byzantium, as we saw in the last chapter, sculpture flourished till checked by the Iconoclast outburst. In Italy,

for centuries a Byzantine province, sculpture never fell wholly into abeyance. But with the Barbarian tramping over Europe and saturated with anti-anthropomorphic ideas, it is not surprising that works of art perished wholesale, and that very few survive. From England and Scotland, curiously enough, comes the testimony of the persistence of figure sculpture of high quality at a moment when it is often asserted that all sculpture was extinct. The splendid cross shafts at Ruthwell and Bewcastle with their admirable figure groups belong to the last quarter of the seventh or to the early eighth century, and, with the fragment of another cross shaft at Durham, prove the vitality of sculpture during the darkest moment of the Dark Ages. It was to Italy that Benedict Biscop and St. Wilfred sent for workmen to decorate their churches, an established fact of great importance in the history of art. It is thought that these fine crosses were erected as memorials of the Synod of Whitby in A.D. 664, an important gathering held to reconcile the conflicting claims of the Roman and Celtic missions carrying on Christian propaganda in England. Some archæologists have found analogies in style between the figure sculpture on the crosses at Ruthwell and Bewcastle, and the groups that decorate the throne of Maximian at Ravenna.

But in France sculpture, if it survived at all, fell to a very low ebb. On the one hand was the Barbarian, full of violent prejudice against representations in stone of the Deity; on the other was a hostile Church. For the Church, fighting a pitched battle with Paganism in Gaul, found sculpture full of dangerous suggestion in the matter of idols. Contact with Pagan ideas meant a relapse into Pagan worship. This fear of a relapse into Paganism was a paralysing influence on whatever intellectual influences were abroad. At the best, the more liberal spirits in the Church hestitated between the necessity of educating the priesthood and their terror, on the other hand, of Pagan literature. Even St. Benedict (480 to 543), the great founder of Western monachism, is commended by St. Gregory as "learnedly ignorant and wisely unlearned." St. Benedict at one period encouraged his monks to copy

manuscripts, thus preserving more or less unconsciously many fragments of classical literature. But it is discouraging to hear that in the end the saint deliberately renounced the use of letters. He retired to the desert fully convinced of the evil results of study on the minds of his followers. It was not a cheerful moment in the history of art and letters.

Happily, the instinct to create artistic forms is fundamental in human nature. As soon as man is man this instinct finds expression; it is one of the sure signs that he has somehow, some way, crossed that profound gulf dividing man and beast, and has received his baptism of the divine. The cave dweller, in an age almost geologically remote, appears on the scene with bone and ivory carvings, whose force and beauty touch the highest point of excellence. The cave dweller, in fact, hails the future with a salute to adventurers that speeds the whole great pageant of art on its way throughout the ages. So it is not surprising that though the spirit of Greece and Rome slumbered awhile, beauty and quality found their expression through the medium of missal painting, of ivories, of mosaics, and of goldsmith's work. Barbarian kings and pious churchmen of limited outlook play their parts, but in due course make room for other actors and fresh ideas.

Out of the chaos emerges the heroic figure of Charlemagne, one of the few characters in history to whom the title of Great can be applied without any misuse of language. Civilisation owes an immense debt to his efforts. The Carolingian renaissance was in its essence a return to Latin culture. Theodoric, the Goth, had already experimented in this sense. That excellent man and most enlightened of conquerors had, at an earlier date, made many efforts to assimilate Roman culture. He dreamt dreams of a revival of the glories of Rome, though in his day the dream was unfulfilled. Charlemagne was to give more concrete expression to Theodoric's idea of a classical restoration. The new movements he set on foot were due to the efforts of an élite and did not spring direct from the consciousness of a people. Two centuries of chaos were yet to follow before the spiritual and intellectual ferment

desired by Charlemagne stirred throughout Western Europe. But this circumstance in no sense robs Charlemagne of the honour due to him. His pedagogues were drawn from all countries—Anglo-Saxon, Irish, Scotch, Lombard, Byzantine, Bavarian, Goths. And there is something very attractive in the picture of this simple man and powerful monarch, himself almost illiterate, but filled with fine instinct for art and letters and a real sense of quality in all that concerned them.

Once again the moment of a great change was at hand. Gaul, as we have seen, was peculiarly fitted to respond to the stimulus of a classical revival. The examples of Roman architecture, though ruined, were still extant in the Gallo-Roman province, and throughout the Dark Ages sarcophagi with accomplished carvings were in existence, and taught their own mute lesson in decoration. During the eighth century a new school of architecture grafted on the Gallo-Roman stock began to develop in France under Lombard influences. This style, impregnated as it was by Byzantine, Oriental, and Barbarian elements, came to its height under Charlemagne and spread throughout all the countries included in his Empire. The churches built at this period followed the general and established plan of the Roman basilica, but features tend more and more to appear that depart from the primitive type. Transepts, which had been used very occasionally at an earlier date, are common after the Carolingian period. The choir develops between the apse and the nave, and the cruciform plan is well established by the ninth or tenth centuries. This cruciform plan and an apse at each end of the building may be regarded as essentially characteristic of Carolingian architecture.

No less characteristic is another innovation, the appearance of a ring of collateral chapels round the apse. Many of the abbey churches built at the period contained relics of the saints and were places of pilgrimage crowded out at various seasons by pious folk. One of the most famous of such churches was St. Martin of Tours. It was more than a famous church; it created a type that was to influence the whole course of Romanesque church building in France.

We shall see in Chapter XI. that the first basilica dedicated to St. Martin of Tours goes back to Gallo-Roman days, and throughout the centuries this venerated church never lost its hold on popular imagination. The idea of the radiating chapels round the apse which the Romanesque architects were to develop with supreme skill sprang from the necessity of finding accommodation for pilgrims who came in flocks at certain seasons of the year to visit the relics. St. Martin of Tours would appear to be the earliest example in France of this new type. Vaulting was attempted more or less tentatively, but the large majority of the Carolingian as of the Merovingian churches were roofed with wood. It was usual to vault the apse, and some efforts were made to deal in a similar way with the side aisles and with crypts. But the throwing of a vault across the main body of a church was an operation quite beyond the powers of the architects of the day. Many principles of construction had been forgotten since eclipse had overtaken the knowledge no less than the power of Rome. Here as elsewhere lost ground had to be retrieved with painful effort. The more honour to the men who, starting from such an unpromising background of disadvantage, little by little made ready a path along which feet surer than their own were to pass into a new era of fulfilment.

Again, like the Merovingian churches, those of the Carolingian period were decorated very richly in a rude style. The first attempts at sculpture during the revival inevitably were poor. The art to which Greece had given supreme and Rome noble expression had fallen into complete abeyance. The Carolingian craftsmen were admirable goldsmiths and workers in ivory, but very feeble performers in stone. Luckily the supply of classical ruins available for church material had given out. Sculptors, therefore, were forced to experiment anew along a path closed for centuries. Columns were introduced with rough carvings of birds and animals, primitive forerunners of an art that the Romanesque sculptors at a later date were to carry to a high point of perfection. Stucco reliefs were fashionable, and walls were decorated with panels of *entrelacs*, fruit, flowers, and other emblems combined with a greater or

less degree of skill. These churches, like their Romanesque successors, were covered with mural paintings. Paint is a frail medium with which to oppose the ruthless march of time, and few frescoes even of the Romanesque period are preserved to us. Of the earlier period practically nothing remains. There is every reason to think that frescoes embodied on a large scale the art and principles of the missal painters. Painting, as we saw,* never fell into the state of complete decadence which overtook sculpture, largely because it was not subject in the same way to ecclesiastical malevolence. Painting, under strong Byzantine influences, went its way tranquilly enough through the Dark Ages, and when the renaissance of art took place was able to expand from an unbroken tradition.

Carving in low relief became very popular in Carolingian times. Foremost among the themes in use were the numerous and intricate designs known as *entrelacs*. These twisted patterns, often of great force and beauty, were repeated over and over again, and became universal throughout Charlemagne's kingdom. The *entrelac* is the essential product of what is known as Barbarian art, and scholars are not agreed as to how that art originated. Was it indeed indigenous among the Barbarians and brought by them from the north? Or was it Oriental in origin and transmitted from an original Asiatic source—Persian, Assyrian, or Sassanian—to the invaders of Eastern Europe? Or, as it crops up persistently in classical decoration, was it simply transmitted from a Roman source and elaborated in the north?

We have much to learn yet about Græco-Scythian art, but Southern Russia had a tradition of splendid gold animal ornaments, some examples of which are preserved for us in museums. During the third century A.D. the migratory Goths were on the wander south of the Black Sea. They came into contact with Christianity, and it is thought that many artistic designs as well as inlaid jewellery of Persian origin were transmitted in turn by the Goths to the people of Northern Europe. Whether this be so or not —and the question remains in dispute—it affords some

* Page 20.

explanation of a very puzzling fact, the appearance of ornament in Northern Europe showing some surprising resemblances to Oriental forms. *Entrelacs* appear on certain decorations at Mycenæ and also on fragments of primitive Egyptian pottery. But there is no proof that Barbarian design derives directly from these remote sources. Twisted and braided forms, first simple, then elaborate, might easily have had an independent origin in different countries. A fine *entrelac* has great decorative quality, and when we find them preserved for us in the sculpture of a Romanesque church in France, they carry our thoughts away in speculation to the burning plains of Mesopotamia and the strange adventures of the Wandering Peoples.

Few authentic monuments of the Carolingian period in France have come down to us. The fragments that remain prove that its art was essentially composite—classical, Byzantine, Oriental, and Anglo-Saxon influences were all prominent. It is difficult, however, even mentally, to reconstruct the primitive appearance of these buildings, for many old churches of Carolingian foundation have been restored to death, losing all their original features in the unhappy process.

On the whole, the Rhine Valley is richer in remains of the Carolingian period than France—the German tradition is more conservative and less sensitive to new ideas than the French. Charlemagne's famous church at Aachen—modelled on the lines of St. Vitale at Ravenna—despite the most painstaking and obliterating of German restorations, still preserves something of its primitive appearance. In France, Germigny-les-Prés and St. Philbert de Grandlieu, in the opinion of Monsieur de Lasteyrie, were founded during the Carolingian period, and he gives a list of churches in other parts of the country which contain in greater or less degree some Carolingian work. Archæologists find the whole period difficult and obscure. It is probable that few existing churches in France are earlier than the eleventh century, so far as the whole fabric is concerned. But many churches incorporate fragments of structure from the earlier period.

There are adequate reasons for this unhappy fact. The

movement set on foot by Charlemagne would have borne fruit at an earlier date but for the chaos that persisted for nearly 200 years after his death. First the raids of the Norman pirates, carrying fire and sword through the richest provinces of France; then the desolating feudal wars of the tenth century replunged the country into the state of barbarism and insecurity from which it had been rescued by the genius of the great king. Certain hopeful people had made up their minds that the end of the world was to take place at the beginning of the year A.D. 1000. Many churches were built at the end of the tenth century, probably by people who thought it desirable to come to terms with death and judgment. But after the fatal date had passed without disaster, relief may have had something to do with the great building activity that seized on Western Europe. We have the explicit testimony of Raoul Glaber, a contemporary writer, who tells us: "C'était une émulation générale parmi les peuples chrétiens à qui éleverait les églises les plus belles et les plus riches. On eut dit que le monde entier, d'un commun accord, avait dépouillé ses antiques haillons pour se couvrir d'une aube blanche d'églises."

We are interested in Glaber's "aube blanche d'églises," for it is under this romantic phrase that he heralds the advent of the Romanesque period in church building.

Thus we arrive, by gradual stages and many checks, at the moment when architecture at the beginning of the eleventh century takes the great step forward known as Romanesque. The new style was a necessary outcome of the experiments of the Carolingian period. Architecture, of course, is not susceptible of exact dates, but, roughly speaking, we may say that Romanesque begins at the end of the tenth century, remains rude and inexperienced till the end of the eleventh, then flowers in the twelfth, and yields place to Gothic in the latter half of the same century.

Romanesque architecture, when it emerges, is found to be a product of Roman tradition, but a tradition in many respects profoundly modified. In structure it owed everything to its ecclesiastical prototype, but the spirit animating it is quite new. Though its first principles derive from

ancient Rome, other influences, both Oriental and Barbarian, are prominent. The stream flows no longer from one fountain-head: it is a mixture of many waters. The Romanesque builders simplified the complications of Roman architecture. They shook themselves free from tradition, renounced costly materials, used the stone of the country, and built with sincerity and independence. Profiting by the Carolingian attempts, they experimented successfully with vaulting, and made of the vault a better and simpler thing than its Roman prototype. Similarly they amplified the basilical plan by the development of choir and transept, by further elaboration of the ambulatory with its ring of chapels radiating from the apse, and by the construction of spires, which, as shown by St. Sernin at Toulouse, can be of exquisite proportions. The number and the immense variety of Romanesque churches still extant in various parts of Europe are proof of the vigorous spirit that marked the new experiments in building.

Though my immediate concern in this book is to tell the story of Romanesque in a way which may make the complex origin of the churches of France intelligible, I must remind the reader that Romanesque architecture spread far afield, throughout and even beyond the limits of Charlemagne's Empire. The great national divisions into which the style falls are subdivided again into provincial schools, each with its own characteristics. As we should naturally expect, Romanesque architecture, deriving as it does from the Carolingian epoch, reached its highest point of development in the two great divisions of Charlemagne's kingdom—France and Germany. The splendid Romanesque churches of the Rhine provinces are in a direct line of descent from the Carolingian tradition, and the Romanesque style persisted for a hundred years longer in Germany than in France.

Lombard art stands in a place apart during the troubled history of the Dark and early Middle Ages. From classical times onwards, sculpture and architecture persisted in Italy, and though great artists and outstanding monuments are lacking, work of good quality appears and reappears. In favourable circumstances this Lombard art, strongly

influenced as we should expect it to be by Byzantine ideas, flowered again, and has its own special quality and character. In its later stages it merged into Romanesque, came into close contact with the schools of Burgundy and Provence, and influenced the development of Romanesque sculpture and architecture in Germany as well as in France.

Under the wing of one or other of these three main groups, Romanesque spread north, south, and east: under Norman influence into England, under Germanic influence into Scandinavia, under the influence of the school of Languedoc into Spain, and into Syria and Palestine from the same source supplemented by the school of Provence. These different members of a great family scattered throughout the world reflected naturally the racial and political ideas of their varying nationalities. Further, they acted and reacted upon one another after the fashion of members of a family in a remarkable, if somewhat confusing, way.

I have already struck a warning note about the formidable controversy that rages over the vault, and in expressing any opinion about it I am aware that I am adventuring on dangerous ground. But it seems to me difficult in this matter to accept the extreme views of either the school of Strzygowski or the school of classical tradition. Christian art and architecture derive, as I have endeavoured to show, from two great sources, Oriental no less than classical, Oriental influences being paramount for some centuries after the Peace of the Church in A.D. 313. To claim exclusive rights for either source throws the whole picture out of focus. That the Persians at an early date had a highly developed school of architecture, that they used the vault and the cupola are incontestable facts. Some startling resemblances exist with churches of a later date. The palace of Ctesiphon, under the Sassanian kings in the sixth century, has, for instance, the same vaulting as the nave of St. Philibert at Tournus in the eleventh. The absence of wood and the exigencies of a dry climate made the problem of roofing urgent in the Middle East. I spoke, on page 6, of vaulted churches in Armenia which may go back as far as the sixth century. No less admirable were

the early Syrian churches, some of which preserve in their ruined state clear marks of the beauty and originality of their style. No doubt the success of this school in handling some very difficult problems in construction spread its influence elsewhere. A great capital is like a magnet, drawing new ideas to itself. Byzantium certainly absorbed many ideas from Iran, both in architecture and design. Rome, though further off, was also a great receiving and distributing centre. She, too, may have been influenced by prototypes from Asia. But, however early the evolution of the vault and of a brick and stone architecture in Persia, why forget that the vault and the cupola were equally known to the Romans, from whatever source the principles had reached them? Is it necessary to import Armenians into France to explain the barrel and the groined vault, when the mediæval architects had under their eyes such practical object lessons as the Roman amphitheatres at Arles and Nîmes? The ground-floor gallery of the Nîmes amphitheatre has a barrel vault reinforced by transverse arches, a principle reproduced time after time in the architecture of the twelfth century. Whether Persia originally influenced Rome is another matter. But the transmission of ideas and principles in the Middle Ages is often second-hand, and in a difficulty it is always wiser to look for a simple rather than for a far-fetched explanation. That *structure* in Romanesque architecture mainly derives from Rome, that *decoration* mainly derives from the East, is, broadly speaking, the position as I see it.

Chronologically, Romanesque architecture falls into two great divisions—those of the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Geographically, as we have seen, it also falls into three main groups — German, Lombard, and French. Architectural influences of high importance flowed into France from both Germany and Lombardy, she in turn giving back as much as she received. Two great Lombard Churchmen exercised a decisive influence on the development of architecture in the eleventh century. As we shall see in Chapter VI., William of Volpiano, a Cluny monk, brought to Dijon in 995 a colony of nine Lombard monks, "versés dans toutes les sciences," who superintended the

building of the famous church of St. Bénigne. Hardly less important was the part played by another celebrated Lombard ecclesiastic, Lanfranc, Abbot of Bec, who left a broad mark on the architecture of Normandy before he crossed the narrow seas to become Archbishop of Canterbury in 1070. Canterbury Cathedral was built under his auspices, and other splendid Romanesque churches in England—known to us more familiarly as Norman—still bear the marks of his influence and inspiration. The relations between Burgundy and Northern Italy were close, and many churches in Provence and Southern France show clear traces of Lombard influence. The Maestri Comacini, a building fraternity with headquarters near Lake Como, are picturesque figures who flit across the pages of many books of archæology. But later research makes it clear that their activities are apocryphal and that they owe their legend to nothing more substantial than a doubtful text and a still more doubtful interpretation of a phrase used.*

The eleventh century in France was not only a century of religious fervour and church building, but of great artistic and literary ferment. Language, no less than architecture, was full of new life. Side by side with the new architectural activity, the various Romance languages were beginning to detach themselves from the Latin and form their first hesitating syllables. Nationalities are in the making. Europe is moving towards the racial and territorial groupings of the modern state. The fetters of the Dark Ages are broken. The spirit of man is adventuring on new shores, and his argosies will return to him laden with great and varied treasure.

* Mr. Kingsley Porter has subjected the Maestri Comacini to very destructive criticism in his "Lombard Architecture." Monsieur de Lasteyrie shares this view.

CHAPTER III

THE BUILDING OF THE ABBEYS

THERE is a remarkable passage about architecture in Victor Hugo's "Notre Dame de Paris." The priest, with his hand on the book just issued from Gutenberg's printing-press, looks across to the towers of Notre Dame, silhouetted against a starry sky. Meditating on the new force that he suspects has entered the world, he utters the prophetic words: "Ceci tuera cela, le livre tuera l'édifice." Victor Hugo goes on to elaborate the theme with characteristic eloquence: "Durant les six milles premières années du monde depuis la pagode la plus immémoriale de l'Hindoustan jusqu'à la cathédrale de Cologne, l'architecture a été la grande écriture du genre humain. Et cela est tellement vrai que non seulement tout symbole religieux mais encore toute pensée humaine a sa page dans ce livre immense et son monument. Jusqu'à Gutenberg l'architecture est l'écriture principale, l'écriture universelle. Ce livre granitique, commencé par l'Orient, continué par l'antiquité grecque et romaine, le moyen âge en a écrit le dernier page."

Victor Hugo's view that the printing-press led to the downfall of architecture is far from being fantastic. There is certainly a curious coincidence between the decay of great building and the development of printing. For thousands of years men expressed themselves, sometimes painfully, sometimes sublimely, in monuments of stone. The temple was the Bible of the race. The printing-press was to give human thought a medium of expression more simple and more sure, but, as we know to our cost, more open to abuse. Whatever the explanation, some great change in the matter of building has been in operation between the Middle Ages and ourselves. Legitimate though our pride in the great scientific discoveries of our own age and of all

the material advantages that accrue from them, there is something in the aspect of our abbeys and cathedrals before which boastfulness stands abashed. True, we may fly in record time from country to country and listen in to the ragtime music of six capitals; electricity may lighten our path and sanitation prolong our days. Science has miracles before which we bow, but the majesty of Durham or Chartres is a secret that eludes us. We cannot forge the key of the treasure house unlocked for us by the old master builders. The genius of one age differs necessarily from that of another, and perhaps it is well to remember that in some things we halt and stumble where our forefathers trod with ease.

But there is another and more practical set of ideas connected with the great buildings of the Middle Ages that may well set us thinking. Those of us who have dabbled in bricks and mortar for our own domestic ends, modest though they be, know that the building even of a cottage entails a whole series of more or less complicated operations. Someone has to design it, someone build it, someone arrange for the purchase and the transport of materials. Someone has to superintend the work, estimate the cost, and see that the contract is properly fulfilled. Workmen have to be collected, paid, and housed. All this, even in the twentieth century, implies elaborate machinery, and to this day often involves difficulty and delay. What must have been the position in the Middle Ages, when building was carried out on such an astonishing scale? How were these difficulties overcome with social organisation in its infancy? It is, above all, the scale that baffles us. For to speak of France alone, it is not a question of a few churches here and there of exceptional merit. Raoul Glaber's remark about the "aube blanche d'églises" is even more true of the twelfth century than of the eleventh. We stand amazed before the vast number of churches possessing noble qualities in design and sculpture. Sculpture of the first order may be found decorating churches in localities remote today. The time, the trouble, the cost, the workmanship implied, is a staggering problem when we reflect on the resources of the Middle Ages and the

precarious position of the arts due to wars without and internecine struggle within.

In any attempt to answer these questions, certain differences must be noted between the circumstances in which the Romanesque abbeys were built and those of the Gothic cathedrals that followed. The attempt sometimes made to range Gothic and Romanesque in hostile camps, to regard the former as purely an expression of the lay as opposed to the clerical mind, is, I think, a mistake. Gothic evolved naturally and inevitably from the experiments of the earlier school. But events and ideas were moving with great rapidity in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and since architecture was very sensitive to the spirit of the times, the churches reflect the changes abroad.

Now the great churches of the eleventh and twelfth centuries (like those of the Carolingian and Merovingian periods) owe their existence to clerical influence and direction. In the early Middle Ages learning and art had no existence outside the great religious orders. Popular devotion centred round the abbeys, and any development of art at this early period was wholly due to monks. All culture radiated from the cloister. Secular as distinct from clerical education was unknown. The famous plan of the Abbey of St. Gall in Switzerland, that dates from the ninth century, throws extraordinary light on the high degree of efficiency reached even at that early period by monastic organisation. Provision is made on the plan not only for the abbey church and the ordinary adjuncts of cloister and refectory, dormitories, and kitchen, but sanitation, heating, and ablutions are included in the scheme. The hospital is isolated on the best modern principles. There is a library for study, numerous workshops, and very complete arrangements made for agriculture.

One great order shines with special lustre of the time of the revival. It is impossible to exaggerate the influence on the whole intellectual development of Europe from the tenth to the thirteenth centuries of the Benedictines at Cluny. The architectural triumphs of the Burgundian school were primarily due to the influence of this celebrated abbey. The order, founded originally, as we saw in the

sixth century, by St. Benedict was reformed in France in 930 by St. Odilon, Abbot of Cluny. By the twelfth century its influence was comparable with that of Rome as a centre of Christian light and learning. Its ramifications were spread all over Europe. It sent three popes to Rome. The call of the First Crusade, led by Peter the Hermit, in 1095 came from Urban II., formerly a Cluny monk. Offshoots of its abbeys existed in England, Spain, Italy, Germany, Hungary, and Poland. Wealthy, cultured, celebrated for their art and learning, the fame of the Burgundian monks was world-wide. Music, no less than architecture and sculpture, was largely developed under Cluniac influences. Like Descartes at a later date, the Cluny fraternity took all learning for their province. The boundaries of knowledge were considerably smaller in their day than in ours, but learned men in turn had to struggle with many handicaps unknown to us.

Abuses at a later date invaded the monastic orders, and monastery and monk are unpopular names to this day in countries where the Protestant purge was complete. But history calls on us to see things steadily and see them whole, and the evils of a subsequent date should in no sense obscure our regard for the great intellectual services of monasticism at its best.

Scarcely less important than Cluny was the influence of the Cistercian order, founded by St. Robert in 1093. St. Robert was himself a Benedictine monk and established his followers at the Abbey of Citeaux, near Dijon, as a protest against the luxury of the latter-day Cluniacs. The austerities of the order were accentuated by St. Bernard, of whose famous protest against sculpture I shall speak later on. But the current was flowing too strongly for even a St. Bernard to check. The severities of the Cistercians broke down before their own increasing wealth and influence, and the abbeys founded by them are noble examples of architectural skill.

In the light of the immense influence wielded by the Cluniacs and the Cistercians, we can understand why the Romanesque churches in France are abbeys rather than cathedrals and derive from a monastic more than from a

secular source. During the Gothic period—that is to say, from the end of the twelfth century onwards—learning had spread from priests to people. Popular liberty had grown; the communes had come into view; there was greater security for life and property; commerce was brisk. All this made for a development of secular as distinct from ecclesiastical life. Knowledge was no longer confined to clerical centres. The eternal feud of the secular clergy with the monastic orders also enters into the story. When all these factors are weighed, it is not surprising that during the thirteenth century cathedrals built by laymen under the patronage of bishops come to the front, as distinct from abbeys founded and maintained by monastic orders.

The first schools of mediæval architecture took their rise, therefore, from the abbeys, and the influence of certain great Churchmen was paramount in the history of architectural development. Art, like the Church itself, was international, and ideas spread with astonishing facility throughout Europe. It is clear that nations and communities were less isolated than perhaps we often fancy. The question of communication in the Middle Ages is full of interest. Considerable traffic took place among educated people. Even the masses were not quite immobilised, thanks to pilgrimages and crusades. There was probably more general traffic about Europe in the twelfth century than there was in the seventeenth. Commerce circulated everywhere, and so did ideas. We can trace the slender spiritual and intellectual paths spread like a network over Europe along which thought travelled. The monks journeyed far and wide carrying out their building operations. There were frequent migrations from house to house as well as from country to country. The smallest abbeys sent their novices to study in mother houses of greater fame. Pilgrimages to Rome, to the Holy Land, to Compostela were frequent. Monks followed the armies of the Crusaders and started building operations on any portion reclaimed from the infidel. If we find in Jerusalem churches built in the style of the French Romanesque, we shall know how to account for a fact so surprising.

Pilgrimages undoubtedly gave a great stimulus to church building. History teaches us that, though in certain respects human nature remains curiously the same throughout the ages, there are fashions and modes of expression common to one generation that pass completely out of the habits of the next. It is certainly difficult for us in the twentieth century to appreciate the craze for pilgrimages and relics. A great deal of shrewd calculation was mixed up with the religious appeal of the Crusaders, but the men and women who went long and arduous journeys on foot to worship the relics of saints were fired by a spirit that has vanished from our own time. A considerable element not only of credulity but of trickery was mixed up with relic worship. Vast prestige and vast revenues accrued to a church possessing really first-class relics, and, as we shall see when we come to speak of Vézelay and Conques, even holy men would stoop to very dubious conduct when a famous relic was at stake.

The great highways, generally of Roman origin, along which the pilgrims travelled, were unquestionably arteries that carried the ideas of the Middle Ages far and wide. In literature, in art, in language, the travellers both received and gave. Those who went to worship in the Holy Land and at the tomb of the Apostles in Rome, or of St. James at Compostela, often brought back vivid impressions of works of art seen on the journey. These were often reproduced as best might be on their return home. The jongleurs and music makers who went with the pilgrims (we know from Chaucer that pilgrims could be very human and very cheery people) carried the famous " chansons de geste " into Italy, and with them the legends of Charlemagne and his knights. Important though the artistic influences that flowed into France from the Italian pilgrimage routes and from the East, the route to the shrine of St. James (Santiago) at Compostela had architectural consequences even more important.

Compostela, the capital of Spanish Galicia, is a deserted and decaying town today, some thirty miles south-west of Corunna. Tucked away in the extreme north-west corner

of Spain, Santiago in mediæval as in modern times lies remote from the main stream of the world's affairs. Yet during the Middle Ages it was a great pulse of religious life vibrating to the worship of thousands. What possible connection could this isolated place have with St. James, the brother of the Lord, beheaded in Jerusalem ? The age was uncritical, and though some fabulous stories were exploited quite deliberately by their authors, once started they ran like wild fire through the stubble of superstitious minds. Anyway, in the ninth century the legend is established that the bones of St. James came floating in a stone coffer by sea and have been found at Santiago de Compostela. Pilgrimages began in the tenth century; by the twelfth century thousands of pilgrims flocked to the shrine from all parts of Europe. A splendid church, one of the greatest examples of Romanesque, was built in Spanish Galicia. It has many features in common with St. Sernin of Toulouse, also a Benedictine foundation. Whenever we touch Cluny we come into contact with a spirit vitalising all forms of architecture while stereotyping none. Church building and the organisation of pilgrimages went hand in hand, for the alms of the pious were essential to the maintenance of monastic establishments. The Compostela pilgrimage certainly influenced the building and the beautifying during the twelfth century of some celebrated French churches. Cluny was dominant in the north of Spain, and Monsieur Mâle expresses the view that the great abbots of Cluny organised the Santiago pilgrimages to strengthen the Spanish Christians in their struggle against the Moors. A stream of traffic poured from France into Spain by four great routes: the first from Provence, the second and third from Burgundy and the East, the fourth from Orleans. The four routes all joined on the southern side of the Pyrenees at Puente la Reina, and from that point the pilgrimage stream flowed in one united current till Compostela was in sight. His devotions finished, no pilgrim failed to prolong his pilgrimage for a further couple of days so as to visit the seashore and collect cockle shells (the emblem of St. James) on the beach. It would have been poor work to go home with-

out this visible hall-mark of his travels and his piety, hallowed by vows made at the shrine of Nuestra Señora de Finisterra.

But Cluny did more than organise the pilgrimages; she directed them along routes where halting-places might be found at her own great abbeys. Many of these places had famous relics of their own, and for the pilgrims it made the journey infinitely more exciting and worth while to worship along the way to Compostela at other shrines scarcely less famous and equally endowed with miraculous virtue. Travellers to Compostela from Provence saw, among others, the great churches at Arles, St. Gilles, St. Guilhem-le-Désert, and Toulouse; those coming from the East either Le Puy, Conques, and Moissac, or Vézelay, Limoges, and Perigueux; those from the north-west Orleans, Poitiers, Saintes, and above all, St. Martin of Tours.

All this reacted inevitably on both architecture and sculpture. The pilgrim's way became the way of craftsman and builder. The great pilgrimage church in France was undoubtedly St. Martin of Tours. Since the mission of St. Martin in the fifth century it had been the religious centre of the country. Only a fragment remains today of the great church with aisles and radiating chapels built in the eleventh century, but there is reason to think that St. Martin was the prototype of the churches along the pilgrimage routes. It is natural that certain common features should mark the buildings that had to cope with the needs not of ordinary worship, but those caused by an influx of pilgrims. Already in Carolingian times, as we saw, the question had become pressing. Aisles were doubled, radiating chapels thrown out to provide accommodation. The difficulty was greater, not less, during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries when the pilgrimage habit had spread far and wide. The amount of practical organisation involved by these prodigious building operations all over France indeed gives us pause. We are forced to reconsider some judgments about an age we are apt to dismiss as uncivilised. Everywhere we find the Benedictine order as both motive force and connecting link, reconciling in a quite admirable spirit the principles spread

by Cluny with the largest measure of elasticity in local practice.

All this goes to prove that monasticism, so far from devoting itself to piety and contemplation, was a life full of affairs and vigorous enterprise. Men of some education were almost invariably " clerks "—that is to say, they were in Holy Orders. The cloister acted as workshop, studio, college, and administrative centre as well as a place of prayer. During the great architectural developments of the eleventh and twelfth centuries the abbeys carried out the functions of builders and contractors, no less than those concerned with the cure of souls. *Ateliers* and workshops were formed in many centres and varied works of art collected with the greatest eagerness to serve as models to the sculptors. When any given set of people desired to build a new church, the first step was to hold something uncommonly like a committee. After much discussion an abbey was chosen, and application made to it for a detachment of monks to come and take charge of the work. Building was not wholly in clerical hands. Many secular craftsmen were trained by the monks, and many others were lay brothers little hampered by the ordinary claims of ecclesiastical life. As time went on secular artists trained originally by the monks formed in turn their own schools of lay craftsmen, and so the great building confraternities grew up.

The secular artists, like the monks, travelled far and wide, and there was keen competition to secure their services. They were men of considerable education and standing and were held in great respect, not to say honour, throughout Europe. Some masters of distinction, for instance Gilabertus at Toulouse and Brunus at St. Gilles, have left signed work of the first quality. There is a delightful flourish about Gilabertus' account of himself: " Gilabertus vir non incertus " (" Gilabertus, a man who knows his own mind "). The great mediæval masters were not above signing their works, and we may be quite sure they were not free from the foibles of the artistic temperament any more than their descendants. The sentimental theory that they were mystics working, so

to speak, on their knees has little to support it. The true mystics throughout the ages are men and women of great practical good sense, and the masterpieces of the Middle Ages are as conspicuous for their clarity as for their genius.

The services of these men had to be paid for, and probably good work has never been cheap work at any period of the world's history. The layout, the plans, the organisation of the building, the supply of labour, materials, and provision—all this must have been no small matter when a big church was under construction. Funds were provided principally in early days by kings, princes, and nobles. Immense sums of money were also collected from the pilgrims who flocked to visit relics at centres of special sanctity. At a later date popular benefactions and civic funds went to the making of the cathedrals.

The transport of building materials must have presented many difficulties. Yet it was carried out on an extensive scale. Transportation from one district to another was effected in the main through the medium of waterways. It is not surprising, therefore, that many schools of architecture developed in river valleys where the problems of transport were relatively easy. Often, to simplify carriage, columns and capitals were worked in one district and exported to another, a fact that explains certain discrepancies otherwise puzzling between the stone of a district and the stone used on a given church.

Popular zeal had its uses in other directions. During the twelfth century the enthusiasm for relic worship led to what is known as the *corvée volontaire* among the laity in order to facilitate the building of certain famous churches. Graphic pictures can be drawn of the building operations of the Middle Ages and the efficiency of their organisation. Church making was, in fact, a great industry, and it was not conducted on haphazard lines. One curious fact emerges from any study of these remote conditions of labour—namely, their collective basis. The skill of the individual worker may and did express itself in his individual work, but the monks were organised in communities and the secular craftsmen in guilds. It is with bodies

and confraternities we are dealing all the time, not with individuals.

I spoke in the last chapter of the great national schools, French, German, and Lombard, into which Romanesque architecture falls.

In France, then as now, not a homogeneous country, provincial schools of great originality and force grew up, reflecting the diversities of climate and character. It is to the existence of these different centres that French architecture in the Middle Ages owes its endless variety and interest. Nothing is stereotyped, nothing monotonous. Every group is alive and on the lookout, so to speak, for an exchange of ideas with its neighbour.

A very different spirit rules in the German group. It is significant how the spirit of German discipline and regimentation crops out at this far-away date. The stately churches of the Rhine Valley are all orderly members of the same family, and, unlike some families, cling closely together. The uniformity in type of the architecture spread throughout the vast territories of the Holy Roman Empire is in marked contrast with the diversity and variety of the French schools.

Romanesque architecture in France may be grouped in seven great schools—the school of Burgundy, the school of Languedoc, the school of Auvergne, the school of Poitou and Aquitaine, the school of Provence, the school of Normandy, and the school of Île de France and the North-East. Spheres of architectural influence in the twelfth century are not clearly marked in France, and archæologists differ among themselves as to their names and limits. As a rough-and-ready method of classification, grouping by schools has its advantages, though the method is perilous unless the word "school" is used in a very broad sense. Artistic influences are not to be daunted by frontiers and overleap the jealous barriers that man is apt to raise against his neighbours. Ecclesiastical divisions were as important as territorial divisions, but as dioceses and provinces seldom coincided this fact helped to break down the rigidity of boundaries.

The various French schools may be compared with

dialects. Their differences are due not only to climatic and political considerations, but also to the building material available. Good stone, easy to work, was abundant in Burgundy, in Provence, in Île de France, in Poitou and in the Loire Valley, and stimulated sculpture in those areas. In Toulouse the scarcity of stone led, as in Milan, to the evolution of a brick architecture of great originality and beauty. In Auvergne, a volcanic country, the rough stone is less tractable to the chisel. In a granite district the task of the sculptor is wellnigh impossible.

These factors all influenced the course of architectural development and marked it with endless variety. Some French churches are dark and heavy, some are vaulted throughout, some are vaulted only on the side aisles, some are richly ornamented, some are poor, almost arid, in decoration. Schools develop their own defects no less than their own excellences. For instance, the Normans, who built churches of splendid design and proportion, were very timid about vaulting and unenterprising in decoration. The twelfth century was a period of adventure and experiment, and after the lapse of 800 years these old buildings have an exciting tale to tell to those who are willing to learn their language and patiently to decipher their message.

Vaulted churches throughout France are more numerous and more ancient south of the Loire and in Burgundy than in the north; but later on, when the tide ran strongly in favour of Gothic, churches were rebuilt wholesale in the northern provinces, and original Romanesque vaulting in this part of France was certainly swept away. I shall return to the vault in the concluding chapters of this book, but am concerned to point out here that it is one of the most baffling and difficult questions in architecture. Though the Romans used the vault, its construction was a laborious affair in classical times, and the mediæval builders simplified the problem in many ways. Here the Burgundians were to the fore. Their churches, spacious, well lighted, and of noble design, were vaulted at an early date. But the vault is a capricious fellow who refuses to conform to any neat category of schools, and qualification follows hard on his

heels wherever he goes. A general rule that holds good in one place, breaks down hopelessly in another. Generally speaking, it is correct to say that south of the Loire the difficulties of the vault had been conquered at a moment when the north was still content to roof many of its fine churches in wood, or, at the best, experiment hesitatingly with vaults on the side aisles. But do not let us forget that outside Lombardy—probably the original centre of experiment with the vault—examples of very early vaulting still survive in Île de France, and that Durham Cathedral has some of the oldest ogival ribs in existence.

Bearing in mind these reservations, we shall find it convenient to adopt the rough grouping mentioned above and to go on tour through various parts of France, visiting some representative churches in each area. Each school makes its own contribution to the great sum total of Romanesque architecture. The prominence of Burgundy was largely due, as we shall see, to the unique position held by Cluny and the great impetus it gave to every form of intellectual life. Ruling houses also left their mark—the Counts of Toulouse in Languedoc, the Guilhems and Plantagenets in Poitou, William the Conqueror and his predecessors in Normandy. The Gallo-Roman tradition lingers on in both Auvergne and Provence, and in Île de France we find a man of genius, Abbot Suger of St. Denis, who holds the key of the future.

The wonderful efflorescence of Romanesque was of short duration. It is amazing that so vast a number of magnificent buildings should have been erected in so short a period. But in the very hour of its own emancipation from the limitations of the past, Romanesque, through the very fact of that emancipation, passed into something else. Gothic architecture was at once an elaboration and a simplification of the earlier system, and its solution of certain technical difficulties that had hampered an earlier age of builders led to its complete and rapid success. In the concluding chapters we shall see how this great transformation came to pass in Normandy and Île de France and the part played by Abbot Suger. During the thirteenth century architecture takes to itself wings. True, in the

Romanesque churches there is already a great advance on the immobility of their classical prototypes. The mediæval architects in experimenting with courage and imagination had endowed old forms with a new spirit. We are conscious that these buildings have become instinct with fresh life, something stirs within them. Romanesque architecture seeks; Gothic finds. Gothic takes possession of a splendid heritage and rules for a time regally. But in the end, having solved every problem, it becomes too much at ease in Zion and the life within it fails. A happier fate was in store for Romanesque architecture. At the moment of supreme endeavour it hands on its torch to Gothic and passes from the scene—a dynasty never dethroned, but merged into a new kingdom.

CHAPTER IV

ROMANESQUE SCULPTURE

The rapid survey we have made of the origins of Romanesque architecture would be incomplete without some account of the sculpture that is the glory of the style.

Two elements combine in architecture: construction and decoration. The typical Romanesque church, as we have seen, is stately and severe. Unlike Gothic, it is never fantastic or airy, standing on tiptoe, so to speak, to reach up to the vault of Heaven. The regularity of design, the great columns, the massive walls, the small windows are eloquent of the classical tradition from which Romanesque architecture derives, profoundly though the tradition had become modified in the course of centuries. But if in structure Romanesque has a classical prototype, it is a very different matter when we come to deal with sculpture. Here we are confronted by a variety of influences, Oriental, Byzantine, Classical, Barbarian, crossing and intercrossing. It is a web of many colours, spun from the threads of diverse nations, and in unravelling it we come face to face with unexpected persons and places. It seems a far cry from the ancient kingdoms of the East to some twelfth-century abbey in an old town of Central or Southern France. Yet the finger of the one has touched the other. The question of Oriental influence has to be stressed again when we approach the subject of sculpture. Decorative themes that appear in Romanesque churches echo ideas from Persia, Syria, Egypt, and the Middle East. These ideas, over a period of many years, reached France sometimes through direct transmission along trade routes, but more often at various removes and through a slow process of infiltration. Byzantium, Venice, Rome, all played their parts as transmitting agents. From the north came jewellery and goldsmith's work brought by the Wandering

Peoples in the course of their migrations. From the south the Mohammedan conquerors of Spain contributed the fine quality of Arab art. Within the limits of a chapter, I can only touch on some leading features in a strange and complicated tale. But it is one adding new values of human interest to the churches of France.

We saw in the last chapter that the monasteries were the great centres from which building activity—as indeed all other forms of culture—radiated. Also that the various *ateliers* attached to the abbeys set out to form collections of such works of art as were available, to serve as models for new experiments in sculpture. The illumination of manuscripts is an art that had reached the highest point of perfection during the early Middle Ages. Though architecture and sculpture had fallen from their high estate, works of art of another kind were produced in the shape of exquisite ivories, goldsmith's work, and illuminations to sacred books. The illuminated Psalm Books and Sacramentaries preserved in our great national collections are not only miracles of gorgeous colour, but their scrolls, lettering, and tiny miniature scenes are no less remarkable for high artistic quality. Difficult though the rebirth of sculpture must have been, the technical obstacles were overcome triumphantly in a short space. What is called the iconography of the Romanesque churches is drawn from a variety of sources and subjects. Fantasy and imagination, inevitably checked in construction by the limitations of the style, were given the fullest scope in sculpture. At no period has decoration assumed more varied and more unconventional forms. Clearly we are confronted by the works of men who have cast off the heavy fetters of custom and propriety and are exploring new realms in a true spirit of adventure.

How, then, did they set about their task ?

We must first of all bear in mind the limitations of the twelfth-century sculptors and the vacuum they were called upon to fill. Byzantium pursues a great and uninterrupted artistic tradition till crippled by the robbers of the Fourth Crusade, but in Western Europe Latinity and the classical tradition had been in the dust for centuries.

Everything had to be started afresh with what help could be got from Byzantine and Oriental works of art, and the ruins desecrated and despoiled of Greece and Rome. There were no picture galleries, no museums, no collections to form taste and to guide style. Books, papers, and illustrated works of art were non-existent. Children never knew the joys of a travelling circus or a visit to the Zoo. Save on some sculptured column in a church, few people had ever seen a strange-looking animal. The first timid efforts of the Carolingians and their successors, when experimenting along a path long closed, resulted in some pathetic productions—"magots sans correction ni beauté," as Monsieur Michel calls them. But we have reason to be grateful to these efforts in whose humble persons a sublime art revives. Things had begun to move again by the beginning of the ninth century. The great value of the halting performances of the Carolingians and their successors lies in a praiseworthy effort to recapture the principles of a lost art, and to clear the way for future development.

Further, they made, as we saw, valuable collections of models for use by the *ateliers* attached to the abbeys. These models were drawn from every available source, and their themes were copied and adapted with little regard to any principle but that of serving a given decorative end. Christian sarcophagi, Byzantine ivories, a few Persian textiles, illuminated manuscripts, coffers in ivory and crystal vases made for the Kalifs of Cordoba were all pressed into service. From the northern races came the jewellery and the *entrelacs* of the art known a little harshly as Barbarian. All these motives thrown into common stock were used as need and fancy dictated. Gold, silver, ivory, and other precious materials were the mediums through which high quality in feeling and execution still expressed itself. Byzantine ivories, enamels, and mosaics hold the fort when other forms of art had suffered eclipse. But the translation of these patterns into the carving of capitals and columns in stone was a task calculated to daunt the inexperienced. It is a proof of the genius astir in the age that the difficulties of technique were surmounted in a period relatively short. By the middle of the twelfth

century a school of sculpture had arisen which in power, originality, and superb execution can look the work of ancient Greece in the face without fear or misgiving.

To understand the origins of Romanesque sculpture in France it is necessary to roam over a wide field geographically. One great influence near at hand played a natural and prominent part in the revival. Gaul, as we saw, was the eldest and dearest daughter of Imperial Rome. Some embers of the classical tradition still smouldered during the Dark Ages, especially in Southern France. When art revived, it was natural that craftsmen, keen to develop their powers, should turn their attention to the ruins—more considerable then than now—of the classical monuments in existence. Carved sarcophagi instinct with the spirit of Greece and Rome were important models for a new generation of sculptors. Old decorative themes lost in oblivion come to light once more. Classical mouldings such as the egg and tongue, the key pattern, and many others begin to run again over frieze and cornice. Provence and Burgundy were to recreate and refashion columns and architraves of the classical period with special skill and faithfulness.

But other influences came from much further afield. Not only Rome and Byzantium, but Persia, Syria, Egypt, all contribute their quota to the new development. Perhaps the most surprising influence of any is what flowed back, as we saw in Chapter II., from Ireland into Europe. These different elements which came together in so strange a fashion all left their mark on the churches and the piety of the Middle Ages.

I spoke in the second chapter of the dominant influence of Oriental ideas both on the infant Church and the theory and practice of the Eastern Empire. Classical tradition, as we saw, underwent a great change after the transfer of the Empire from Rome to Byzantium. Though we may hesitate to sweep Rome aside after the summary fashion of Strzygowski, it is something of a shock to find how strong a hold Oriental ideas have over the Western world from an early date in the Christian era. The countries of the Mediterranean basin even during the Dark Ages

remained in closer contact one with another than would at first sight seem to be possible. I have already pointed out the error of thinking that traffic between the East and the West began with the Crusades. Commercial contact, often close, had been maintained both before and after Arab conquests. No less important, as we have seen, was the influence of pilgrimages. The Grand Tour of the eighteenth century had its parallel in long wanderings to holy places both East and West. A visit to Byzantium, the home of relics, was a desirable goal for every good pilgrim. Miraculous indeed must have been the stories told over the fire during the long winter evenings by travellers who had returned home safely after seeing such marvels. Probably even among the pious there was some fairly tall talk about shrines visited and adventures by the way. Since human nature changes very little, one may feel sure that many pilgrims brought home not only new ideas, but souvenirs for their families in the form of ivories, jewellery, or textiles.

These minor objects, and others of greater value in the possession of kings and abbots, came some from one country, some from another. Under the Sassanian monarchs a great renaissance of art had taken place in Persia. Persian tissues and works of art reached Western Europe through diverse channels. We know of the contact between Gaul and the Sassanians through Apollinaris Sidonius, who, writing from Auvergne in the fifth century, comments on the fine Persian carpets or hangings in existence there. "Let the fabric from a far land display the heights of Ctesiphon and of Niphrates and the wild beasts racing over the field," he says in a description of one of the sumptuous banquets common in Gaul.* During the Merovingian period the Copts, who, we have seen, were in touch with the convents of the West, may have provided another channel for the circulation of Oriental ideas.

Syria played an important part as a distributing agency, thanks to her trade relations with the West. The Syrians were the great merchant traders of the Mediterranean from the fourth to the seventh centuries and carried on regular

* Dalton, "Letters of Sidonius Apollinaris."

commercial relations with Europe. Oriental works of art, ivories, textiles, formed part of their stock-in-trade, and the Merovingians, eager to decorate their poorly built churches, drew freely on the models thus supplied. Syrian art at the period was not a great art, but it combined certain Hellenic elements with others drawn from Persia and Chaldea. In these circumstances it is not surprising that Merovingian art already reproduces Persian symbols such as the Tree of Life with affronted animals and birds. Three familiar themes taken by the Syrians from the Jews (but possibly of Assyrian origin) reappear frequently in their new surroundings. These are the Star with Six Rays, the Rosace, and the Helix. These models were not lost during the renewed confusion of the post-Carolingian period, and they were to hand when more favourable conditions dawned with the eleventh century. Once again we may thank monastic life for the sanctuary it provided. Even the most reckless pirate hesitated to sack an abbey. Superstition made good what religion lacked, and hardened sinners had little stomach for a brawl with a priest, bell, book, and candle in hand.

From Syria, from Egypt, from Persia, no less than from Byzantium, Oriental ideas reached the West prior to the seventh century. Then came the shock of the Arab conquests. Syria and Egypt collapsed before Islam. The fierce breath from the desert consumed like fire the old but decadent culture of these ancient peoples. The Sassanians, though superior in many ways to their Syrian and Egyptian neighbours, fell under the same yoke. But the vitality of Persian art and its essential quality triumphed over extinction. In many respects it led its captors captive. Persian design became an integral part of the decoration called Arab and, thus transferred, spread through the Mohammedan world. For the wild sons of the desert did not remain untouched by the culture and the spirit of races now dominated by the Crescent. Arab progress in civilisation was as astonishing as their conquests. Bagdad, under the Abbasids, Cordoba under its Kalifs, became in their turn centres of culture and learning.

We are apt to sweep aside everything connected with

Mohammedanism as a dead end, a paralysing hand laid on intellectual progress. We forget that for three centuries Arab science and Arab learning shone like stars in a dark world. From the eighth to the beginning of the twelfth century, scientific study was carried on in the great schools that sprang up in centres of Mohammedan influence. Mathematics and medicine owe an eternal debt to researches in Bagdad, Ispahan, Bokhara, Cufa, Alexandria, and Cordoba. Philosophy was studied, and the works of Aristotle translated from Arabic into Latin found their way by this strange channel into Western Europe. Commercial activity, so far from being checked, was more vigorous than before. The ships of Haroun al-Raschid flew the Crescent on the far-away shores of Korea as well as on the Atlantic seaboard. His exchange of civilities with Charlemagne and the Arab mission that reached Aachen in 801, bringing jewels, bronzes, and textiles to the Emperor of the West, suggests a strange mediæval picture combining memories of the Queen of Sheba with the struggling culture of the Teuton. The gifts included an elephant, a water clock, and the keys of the Holy Sepulchre. Gibbon, who suffered from what in modern jargon would be called a Charlemagne complex, describes the incident in a passage of special acidity. "It is not easy," he writes, "to conceive the private friendship of a Frank and an Arab who were strangers to each other's person, language, and religion; but their public correspondence was founded on vanity, and their remote situation left no room for a competition of interest."*

As for the elephant, those who find in Hannibal's passage of the Alps one of the open questions of history, would be interested to know whether that doubtless harassed quadruped was conducted across the mountains into Germany, or if he travelled up the Rhone Valley.†

* Gibbon, "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," vol. vi, p. 176. (John Murray, 1887).

† According to Mr. Fletcher, the name of the elephant was Aboulabbas; it had a keeper called Isaac the Jew, and it perished on active service in 810, when Charlemagne was inconsiderate enough to take it with him during his campaign against the Danes (Fletcher, "The Making of Western Europe," p. 263).

The contact of sovereigns only emphasises the contact between humbler people. Amid all the confusion of the times, Eastern influences penetrated into countries never politically subject to Islam, and a constant exchange of works of art went on. Bearing in mind the close artistic and commercial relations between Islam and Christianity before the Crusades, it is a little difficult to understand some aspects of those plundering expeditions. Ecclesiastical thunder, in view of the facts, seems a little overdone. It is clear that whatever the fanatical clichés of the hour, there were plenty of people content to trade with the Infidel and benefit surreptitiously both by his art and his wares. It was not an age in which to raise your voice against the will of king and priest, but men of minds so vigorous as the builders of the mediæval churches must have retained powers of independent judgment, however silent as to the follies of the hour. And throughout Europe we may feel sure that large numbers of decent merchants, with their trade upset, cursed the rhetoric of the Crusaders heartily, and worshipped devotedly at their own little shrine of business as usual.

The continuity of the Byzantine Empire at a time when Rome was in the dust and the Barbarian master of Western Europe was of inestimable value to civilisation. The quality of Byzantine art and its great magnificence have not always been appreciated at their true value. The Eastern Empire has never had much hold on popular imagination, and to most people the word Byzantine only implies something stiff, disagreeable, and wanting in life. The Turk is no archæologist and frowns on archæology in others. He has trampled heavily on evidences of the two Golden Ages of Byzantium—the first from the fifth century A.D. to the Iconoclast outbreak in the eighth century, the second from the ninth to the end of the twelfth century. During both of these periods works of art of supreme excellence were produced whose importance is better appreciated today than by an earlier generation of scholars. But Byzantium reacted on Western Europe not only indirectly, but directly. The exodus that took place from Byzantium to Italy during the eighth century

as a result of the Iconoclast dispute gave a vigorous impetus to the spread of Byzantine ideas and models. This dispute happened to coincide with the rise to power of Arab influence and accidentally reinforced Mohammedan ideas from quite another side. The Iconoclasts, like the Albigensians at a later date, were a bundle of contradictions. They were not in any sense of the word Puritans, but a pleasure-loving people with a passion for music, dancing, and games. We find Pope Gregory addressing an acrimonious remonstrance to the Emperor Leo the Isaurian on the frivolity of his people in general and the unseemly revels of Byzantium in particular. The Pope complains that dancing, not doxologies, fills the public mind. But the Iconoclasts were apostles of thorough in another direction. Inspired not a little themselves by the monotheistic spirit of Islam, and sniffing Paganism at every turn, they declared ruthless war against images and sculpture in the round. Not content with obliterating pictures and mosaics under whitewash, they destroyed them wholesale. We owe it to their efforts that few masterpieces remain of the first great period of Byzantine art between the fifth and eighth centuries. Carvings and images thus broken up were replaced by a form of decoration derived from the flora and fauna of the East. Churches once adorned by saints, martyrs, and apostles now found their walls covered with birds, beasts, and foliage. Instead of incidents from the Gospels, peacocks, griffins, harpies, wild animals of the most fantastic shapes and forms looked down on the worshipper.

The Empress Theodora, when acting as regent for her unpleasant son Michael the Drunkard (842 to 867), restored images and inaugurated the second Golden Age of Byzantine art. This lasted till the infamous adventure of the Fourth Crusade brought destruction on Constantinople in 1204. But the birds and beasts still held their place in decoration, together with fruit and foliage, and became common in Italy during the ninth century. Oriental symbols which had long since lost their original meaning came into Europe, therefore, by this channel, as well as from direct intercourse between the East and the West.

Animal decoration is an outstanding feature of Romanesque sculpture. Animals, of course, had appeared in art before, but never with such a wealth of imagination as was lavished on them by the twelfth-century sculptors. Many things common in early Christian art were used. The griffin, the lion, the peacock, two peacocks drinking out of one cup are familiar symbols in the decoration of the Catacombs before they reappear in the Romanesque period. But these graceful birds and animals of Persian origin, transmitted to the early Christians through the medium of the Hellenised mind, have nothing in common with the monsters, at once ferocious and arresting, that we meet at churches such as Moissac and Souillac. Beasts tearing each other to pieces, standing one on the back of another and engaged in mortal combat, are Oriental in origin. They can be traced back through the ages to their far-away prototype in Assyria and Chaldea. Greek animal art was beautiful and gracious. The Middle Ages turned from it to the sombre monsters bred of the desert. Some of the more complicated forms reached France in the Middle Ages, however, via Ireland.

I touched in the previous chapter on the mystery of the Irish art that shines as a light in the darkness from the eighth to the ninth centuries. We have still much to learn about the relations of that art with Europe and Asia. In the Irish illuminated manuscripts of the eighth and ninth centuries, animals, birds, and monsters caught in a network of *entrelacs* devour each other in inextricable confusion. These animals have lost all natural form and become etiolated, drawn out, and highly stylised. Here the Oriental imagination has been elaborated by accretions once called northern and Barbarian. But Barbarian art itself, according to Strzygowski, is said to have drawn its original inspiration from Iran and the countries bordering on the Black Sea. So once again we are brought face to face with the ideas of the unchanging East transmitted, and, of course, transformed by the genius of the northern races through which they passed. The Persian Tree of Life (with affronted animals on each side of it), already in use among the Merovingians, appears over and over again in

[*Photo. Edit. Giraudon.*

SOUILLAC : TRUMEAU.

[P. 66

Romanesque sculpture. Nearly always it divides two isolated beasts. The symbolic meaning had, of course, long since been forgotten. At Chartres, Meaux, and other places we can trace ideas whose ancestry goes back to Assyrian bas reliefs. At Bayeux Cathedral we shall find a bas relief inspired by a Chinese kylin. Communication with the Far East does not seem out of the question, though there is no evidence to show any sort of regular traffic between China and Europe, of the kind common between Europe and Asia Minor. But works of art drifted across Asia, and the motifs they transmitted reached Europe subsequently modified by various mediums.

The famous protest of St. Bernard against sculpture raises a question of great interest. How far was mediæval sculpture influenced by symbolism and symbolic ideas? Are we to seek a didactic meaning in the monsters who tear each other to pieces on the capitals of the period? The difficult and involved speculations concerned with this problem are more conveniently considered in a separate chapter. Suffice it to say here that I do not think it necessary to read a symbolic meaning into every beast, fanciful or frightful, that ramps in a Romanesque church. The sculptors of the day were craftsmen as well as Churchmen, and the note of simplicity and directness is very evident in their work. Unlike certain luckless children of a later date, they had never learnt to correlate the snowdrop. They worked better and talked less than their descendants. There were no barren patches to fill in with tortuous cranks and fads. A sombre streak and a gay streak run side by side through the life of the Middle Ages, and the art of the period reflects both tendencies. One observation arises. If decoration had always to conform to symbolism it would be very difficult to account for the Mohammedan influence that, according to Monsieur Marquet de Vasselot, can be traced over and over again in the Romanesque churches throughout France.* Arabic foliage was very popular, and the Romanesque sculptors were specially attracted by the ornamental designs to

* Michel, "Histoire de l'Art," vol. i., part ii., p. 896, "Les Influences Orientales."

which Arabic writing lent itself. Naturally they adopted the latter without suspecting the original meaning of the words. Cufic lettering appears on a door at Le Puy and on a capital in the cloister at Moissac. No one will accuse the sculptors of a wish to traffic with heathen phraseology. But a good decorative effect, not symbolism, is clearly what they had in mind.

Once again I must lay stress on the greatness of the void these men were called upon to fill. The models on which they worked in the first place came, as we have seen, from a diversity of sources. Any grist was welcome in that particular mill. But, as we should expect from artists so daring and so original throughout the ages as the French, the twelfth-century sculptors were in no sense servile imitators. In receiving the ideas of other lands they reminted the gold in the treasury of their own imaginations. The force and originality of a race richly dowered in all matters of art could not be kept in any leading strings of tradition and authority. As Hollingshead is to Shakepeare, so is the illuminated manuscript, the embroidered textile, the ivory coffer, to the sculpture of Burgundy or Languedoc.

Many interesting questions of technique arise. In the dawn of the revival we have always the impression of decoration being translated from one flat surface to another. The bas relief precedes the more difficult and daring experiment of sculpture in the round. But as the chisel learns its task, it gains in power and virility, till within a few decades we are presented with an art as splendid as it is moving.

At every stage in its development Romanesque sculpture bears the trace of eagerness and adventure. Ornament revives with a fresh use of the old classical motifs. The key pattern is common (especially in Provence and Burgundy), also beautiful scrolls (*rinceaux*), in whose festoons animals or figures are caught. Doors with richly decorated archivolts, carrying a wealth of carving, are a feature of the period.

But it was above all in the carving of capitals that the Romanesque sculptors showed their powers of imagination

[*Archives Photographiques, Paris.*

AUTUN: CAPITAL OF NAVE.

and resource. The variety of themes, the boldness of execution are astonishing. Many fine capitals are inspired by variations of the old acanthus model. But whereas classical architects contented themselves with three decorous forms—Doric, Ionic, and Corinthian—the Middle Ages developed a hundred variations of the theme and adapted local foliage with striking success. Capitals formed of *entrelacs* and other fantastic designs were a complete departure from classical precedent. Birds and beasts next appear and evolve from isolated figures into what are called historiated capitals. An historiated capital is out to tell a tale, and in some churches symbolic stories and scenes from the Old and New Testament are developed on a regular plan.

Statuary reappears, first rude and tentative, but soon gathering force and beauty. The deformed objects of Carolingian sculpture are replaced by tympana groups and the noble figures that decorate portals of churches. Splendid fragments of figure sculpture are to be found in the museum at Toulouse. A masterpiece like the Eve of Autun proves that sculpture did not die with its classical expression. Throughout France, in varying degrees of beauty and execution, tympana, carved doorways, decorative façades, and historiated capitals come into existence. At Autun, Vézelay, and Moissac we shall meet the great carved groups that form so noble an ensemble over the doorways. As with the schools of architecture in France, so with the schools of sculpture. There are variations from district to district that are best appreciated on the spot. The schools of Burgundy, Auvergne, Languedoc, Provence, the Saintogne, and Poitou have all clearly marked features. It was natural that sculpture in the round should reappear in the south and centre because, as we saw, classical remains were numerous in these provinces, and, secondly, because they had been less penetrated by the anti-anthropomorphic ideas of the Barbarians and the races of the north. In Auvergne the Gallo-Roman influence betrays itself in a somewhat heavy touch. But in Provence, though the classical inspiration is marked, beauty and dignity are no less achieved. In

Burgundy and Languedoc we find two splendid and original schools: one that centres round Cluny, the other round Toulouse. Toulouse, before the tragedy of the Albigensian struggle, was a brilliant seat of culture and learning. Here we find statues through whose draperies and folds the wind of a keen spirit is blowing, and great sculptured compositions like the tympana at Moissac. In Burgundy, groups no less wonderful decorate the tympana of Vézelay and Autun. The elongation of the figures is a remarkable feature of Burgundian art. Large tympana groups are lacking in Poitou and the Saintogne, but the sculptors in this district excelled in decoration and the gift of covering archivolts with a wealth of small sculptured figures.

We shall hear more about these places in the later chapters of the book. Naturally levels of excellence vary. Not every sculptor is gifted; not every district can afford to spend money on its church. But one thing can be said with confidence. At its best this twelfth-century sculpture is one of the noblest expressions which the heart of man has conceived and his hand has executed. Gothic art may, and does, progress a step further. But it is the beauty of the high midsummer pomps as compared with the infinite promise and suggestion of the spring.

CHAPTER V

SYMBOLISM

On the threshold of Burgundy we must pause and consider the question of iconography. Lovers of Romanesque architecture, before whom the great vistas of the twelfth-century thought and ideas have opened up, are bound sooner or later to face this baffling problem. As we pass from province to province throughout France, we shall find churches marked certainly by local differences of style, but presenting the common feature of a wealth of sculpture. Magnificent portals occur in both Romanesque and Gothic buildings, but the Romanesque church has the special feature of historiated capitals—*i.e.*, capitals decorated with figures of men and animals. These drop out of sight in the thirteenth century. The branch of Romanesque architecture known as Norman was poorer in sculpture than any other school, and as the English Romanesque churches were built under Norman influence, it follows that historiated capitals have little or no existence in our own country.

The French Romanesque churches are a revelation to most English people in their historiated capitals and the elaborate decoration of their portals. The traveller is confronted with a mass of figures, animals, floral and braided designs. Fantastic beasts, biting each other and devouring hapless human beings, are common. The work is often rude and archaic; both time and the rough hand of man have dealt harshly with it. But withal Romanesque sculpture opens up a new world to a generation emancipated from the standards of taste imposed by the classical revival. At first sight it seems hopeless to find any meaning in the strange groups of men and beasts, especially of the fantastic animals that range from pillar to pillar in the nave. Have these compositions any

meaning? If so, what do they represent, and from what source did the mediæval builders and sculptors draw such weird conceptions? That the models came from strange and unexpected quarters and bear many marks of Oriental origin we saw in the previous chapter. But is the subject-matter symbolic and didactic, or must we regard these figures and beasts merely as works of art that have no special meaning?

Archæologists are far from being agreed among themselves as to how this question should be answered. Some have found a doctrinal meaning in every fantastic head that decorates a pillar or every twist of a demon's tail. Others assign a very modest place to symbolism in sculpture. Church building, they would say, was an enterprise developed and directed by the monastic orders, and twelfth-century art admittedly spoke in terms of religion. The general plan was prescribed by monks, but the sculptor, once at work, soon threw off ecclesiastical trammels and fashioned after his fancy.

From what sources did the mediæval sculptors draw their themes?

This difficult question has been subjected to close and detailed examination by Monsieur Émile Mâle in two remarkable works: "L'Art Religieux du 12ème Siècle" and "L'Art Religieux du 13ème Siècle." In the latter volume this gifted scholar draws a picture—one of absorbing interest—of the general spiritual and intellectual outlook of the Middle Ages and the sources from which the twelfth century drew its ideas. It was, as he says, a century of encyclopædists, when the views of earlier generations were codified and set in order. An enormous volume of theological literature had piled up in the course of centuries, much of it poor, superstitious stuff, and all of it quite uncritical. Luckily many writers only repeated the theories of their predecessors without adding to their number. The outlook of the thirteenth century is summed up for us by Vincent de Beauvais in his celebrated work the "Speculum Majus." According to Vincent de Beauvais, the world and all it contains is a mirror that reflects the thought of the Divine Word. Consequently every creature and object, from

man to the lowest animal or bird, has a moral significance. Plants and minerals are also brought within the scope of this interpretation. Other writers, famous in their day, took up the same tale. In addition to the "Mirror" of Vincent de Beauvais, Walafried Strabo dealt in the "Glose Ordinaire" with the relations between the Old and New Testaments, and Guillaume Durand in the "Rational des Divins Offices" with the symbolism of the Liturgy. The "Historia Scholastica" of Pierre Comestor and the "Golden Legend" of Jacopo de Voragine found a place in most monastic libraries. Honorius d'Autun, of whom we shall hear again when we come to speak of the cathedral in his native town, was an apostle of symbolism a hundred years earlier than Vincent de Beauvais. He has left us a pregnant sentence as a clue to the whole theory of symbolism. "Toute création," he writes, "est l'ombre de la vérité et de la vie." Symbolists take the view that mediæval art is permeated with this idea, and that it is writ large on the churches of the twelfth and still more of the thirteenth centuries. Symbolism admittedly is far more developed in the thirteenth century than in the twelfth—a development largely due to Abbot Suger at St. Denis. Symbolism in Gothic art expresses itself no longer in historiated capitals, but in stained glass and in the statues decorating the splendid portals of the cathedrals.

But how far do the Romanesque churches of an earlier date echo the theories of this forgotten literature, some of it of great antiquity? Was this literature sufficiently well known to have influenced sculpture?

The authors just mentioned, between them cover a vast range of subject-matter, all of it directed to the symbolic interpretation of the various forms of human existence. They approach life from the standpoint of the Creation and the Redemption, the deadly peril of the soul of man and its urgent need of salvation. Such conceptions are so remote from those of our own scientific age that it is difficult for us to picture a world in which they were uppermost. But we cannot enter into the real genius of mediæval art and all it has to tell us, unless we are prepared to take our minds

to pieces and remake them after the fashion of those distant years. The eleventh and twelfth centuries were ruled by monastic thought, and the monk lived with a lively and constant sense of both Paradise and Hell Fire. All that mattered to him was the Church and the eternal truths it taught. Art was a method of bringing home these truths to a world at large. When the power to read and write was confined to a very few people, sculpture unquestionably played a practical part in helping an illiterate congregation to visualise the teaching of the Bible as expounded by the priest. Stories from the Old and New Testaments, legends of saints, and other sacred allegories were driven home by the sculptured scenes on tympanum and capital. In his volume on "Cluny," Abbé Terret quotes very aptly Villon's verse about the peasant woman who in naïve language expresses the awe and emotion felt by a simple and credulous soul in face of the painting of a mediæval church:

> "Femme je suis pauvrette et ancienne
> Qui riens de sçay ongues lettres ne leuz;
> Au monstrer vay, dont suis paroissienne
> Paradis painct où sont harpes et luz
> Et en enfer où dampnês sont boulluz
> Lung me fait pour, l'autre joie et liesse."

In the Middle Ages truth was to a great extent veiled by symbol. The Church in its ceremonies spoke a symbolic language. To the average Protestant the Mass appears as a meaningless pantomime, slightly ludicrous and wholly unintelligible. It is in fact a sacred drama of profound significance to the believer. The Mass is the supreme expression of centuries of thought steeped in symbolic values. Every gesture has a symbolic significance, every vestment a symbolic use. Here day by day the Church in ritual form commemorates and repeats the Sacrifice on Calvary. The whole of mediæval thought was coloured by this outlook. But as time went on, other ideas arose, and the mediæval point of view dropped out of sight. Symbolism was forgotten by the end of the sixteenth century. The Renaissance was frankly ashamed of the old fables of the Church; the Council of Trent blushed for them. Gothic

became a term of reproach. Its cathedrals, its art, its sculpture, were despised by men of the classical revival, who regarded them as the expression of a barbarous mentality. The earlier symbolism was forgotten, and with it was lost the interpretation of the great sculptural works whose iconography was drawn from the visions of a more credulous age. We have, therefore, to recapture the spirit of the days long before the invention of printing, if the lost language that speaks from capital and portal is to become intelligible again.

The question is one of so much interest that it repays closer examination. What evidence is forthcoming in support of the view that the sculpture of the twelfth century is rooted in symbolic values ?

The works of Vincent de Beauvais, Honorius d'Autun, and the other writers mentioned above were well known in the thirteenth century. These authors, however, only reproduced in more popular form ideas that long before had found expression in Carolingian Bibles, Byzantine Psalm Books, and other early works. Through these illuminated volumes, not only ideas but their symbolic representation was handed on from generation to generation. The words " Byzantine formula," " Syrian formula," and " Alexandrian formula " refer to the symbols in use among these ancient Christian communities, each of whom worked out an iconography special to itself, and decorated its own liturgical works after its own fashion. The world of books was a small one in those days, but manuscripts were in great demand among the handful of cultured folk, the monasteries in a current phrase being the centres of production, distribution, and exchange.

A close relationship has been established between many of the symbols described by these early writers and church sculpture of the twelfth century. Some fantastic tale in the Bestiaries or Mirrors often throws light on an historiated capital that otherwise is inexplicable. These ancient volumes certainly influenced sculpture, though any detailed study of their iconography would carry me far beyond the limits of this book.

Early in the twelfth century the Bestiaries had been

popularised by Honorius d'Autun in the collection of sermons gathered together in the "Speculum Ecclesiæ." Efforts to harmonise the narratives of the Old and the New Testaments go back to the days of the Fathers. Origen, Clement of Alexandria, and St. Augustine all are concerned to show their close relation one to another. In the "City of God" St. Augustine proclaims that the Old Testament is in fact the New covered by a veil, and that the New is the Old with the veil withdrawn. This idea that the Old Testament is a shadow and forerunner of the Gospel colours all the work of Honorius d'Autun. In his sermons he draws minute parallels between the Old Law and the New, and presses the whole animal creation into service as symbols of the trials, temptations, and triumphs of the Christian life. Vincent de Beauvais, in his "Speculum Majus," deals with the same set of ideas. The "Speculum Majus" is divided into four parts: the Mirror of Nature, the Mirror of Science, the Mirror of Morality, the Mirror of History. In the Mirror of Nature the world with its animal creation is treated as a symbol of God. The unknown author—possibly a Gnostic—of the "Physiologus," had symbolised moral virtues and vices under the form of animals as early as the second century A.D. This work had an immense success in its early forms, both Greek and Latin. This success was repeated when it reappeared in the twelfth century translated into popular language under the title of the Bestiaries.

The Bestiaries, as the name implies, teem with religious ideas expressed in animal form. The eagle, the unicorn, the phœnix, and pelican appear as symbols of Christ; the asp, the gryphon, the basilisk, the dragon as symbols of the devil. The lion plays a dual part in iconography. Sometimes he is represented as a symbol of the Resurrection, sometimes as the devouring power of the Evil One. No theme in art is better known than the mysterious beasts of the Vision of Ezekiel who reappear in the Apocalypse as surrounding the Throne of God. From early times they were treated by the Church as symbols of the Evangelists —the angel representing St. Matthew, the lion St. Mark,

[*Archives Photographiques, Paris.*

AUTUN: CAPITAL OF NAVE.

the ox St. Luke, the eagle St. John. In fresco and mosaic, in carving and painting, these emblems have been handed down throughout the ages and still hold their place in popular imagination.

The twelfth century spun many elaborations round the original theme. Long explanations were given as to the why and wherefore of a particular Evangelist being represented by a particular symbol. The moral qualities of the beasts—the reason of the man, the patience of the ox, the courage of the lion, the soaring vision of the eagle—all are necessary to the salvation of the soul. Minerals and flowers also have their symbolic value in the Mirror of Nature—the rose is an image of the Virgin, while the thorns symbolise the Cross. Various gems such as sardonyx and the amethyst speak of attributes of the Saviour. Never has the human mind plunged down more curious byways than in the symbolic literature of the age of faith.

The Mirror of Science preaches the doctrine of regeneration by work. Here appear the signs of the Zodiac and the Labours of the Months—subjects we shall find repeated on numerous churches. The liberal arts — Grammar, Rhetoric, Dialectic, Arithmetic, Music, Geometry, Astronomy—are also commended as pointing to the path that leads from earth to Heaven.

The third Mirror deals with the Psychomachia, the combat of the virtues and the vices—the eternal struggle of the Flesh against the Spirit. Virtues are symbolised as warrior maidens with spears and shields—an idea as early as the days of Tertullian. Here again we find a popular theme adopted by Romanesque sculptors in different parts of France, especially in the western districts.

The Mirror of History is a picture of the pilgrimage of man on his journey from earth to Heaven. This Mirror deals with the Old Testament and the New, lives of the saints, legends of holy men and women, and fables with a moral meaning. The " Speculum " is a precious guide to the iconography of mediæval art, for sculpture has frequently given concrete expression to the themes it sets forth. Monsieur Mâle's detailed studies leave no doubt as to the influence which the one had brought to bear on

the other and the light thrown on many sculptured groups of doubtful interpretation.

Abbé Victor Terret of Autun, whose great works on Burgundian sculpture have made all archæologists his debtor, is an enthusiastic upholder of the symbolist theory. To him every capital, every carving in a church like Autun or Vézelay forms part of a detailed iconographic plan, and is a definite symbol of some religious truth. So far the evidence seems all on the side of the symbolists, but at this point we are brought up with a quick turn by no less a personage than St. Bernard himself. If sculpture was in fact the handmaid of the Church, setting forth her practice and precept in visible form, how comes it that St. Bernard, most ardent of Churchmen, denounces it in such unmeasured terms? If the historiated capital existed merely to instruct the poor and lowly in the sweets of Heaven and the horrors of Hell, why should St. Bernard turn and rend so desirable an ally? His protest against sculpture becomes quite unintelligible if sculpture was primarily out to serve a didactic use. Listen to his violent words addressed to the Abbot of St. Thierry on the misdirection of money and effort in the matter of great church building:

"I say naught of the vast height of your churches, their immoderate length, their superfluous breadth, the costly polishings, the curious carvings and paintings which attract the worshipper's gaze and hinder his attention, and seem to me in some sort a revival of the ancient Jewish rites. Let this pass, however: say that this is done for God's honour. . . . But in the cloister, under the eyes of the Brethren who read there, what profit is there in those ridiculous monsters, in that marvellous and deformed comeliness, that comely deformity? To what purpose are those unclean apes, those fierce lions, those monstrous centaurs, those half-men, those striped tigers, those fighting knights, those hunters winding their horns? Many bodies are there seen under one head, or again, many heads to a single body. Here is a four-footed beast with a serpent's tail; there, a fish with a beast's head. Here again the forepart of a horse trails half a goat behind

it, or a horned beast bears the hinder quarters of a horse. In short, so many and so marvellous are the varieties of divers shapes on every hand, that we are more tempted to read in the marble than in our books, and to spend the whole day in wondering at these things rather than in meditating the law of God. For God's sake, if men are not ashamed of these follies, why at least do they not shrink from the expense ?"*

Now Monsieur Mâle is careful to insist that the beasts that excite the special ire of St. Bernard have no symbolic meaning. He recognises that they do not form part of any iconographic scheme, but are purely decorative and express no idea beyond the whim or fancy of the particular "imagier." Even Abbé Terret admits—a little reluctantly—that some of the ramping beasts in Burgundian sculpture are merely reproductions in stone of Oriental monsters. St. Bernard's diatribe makes it impossible to take any other view. But any such breach in the citadel of symbolism entails the entry of an army of doubts. This view of the Church as the Bible of the poor, how far can it be sustained in view of St. Bernard's attack and the stringent rules he lays down for simplicity and lack of all decoration in churches built for the Cistercian order ?

I think the explanation lies in the dual current of thought and feeling that runs through the twelfth century, and is in no small measure responsible for its absorbing interest. Outwardly the monk was in charge, speaking the language of religion and concerned only with the affairs of God. But minds were astir through Western Europe, and within the cloister itself other ideas and other principles were at work. Men like the great Abbots of Cluny and Suger of St. Denis were pious sons of the Church, but their passion for art and all that concerned art proves an outlook on life far removed from an hourly concern about the

* Professor Coulton's translation in the "Mediæval Garland." The relics of St. Bernard were formerly wrapped in a magnificent piece of Sassanian silk, now in the Treasure of the Cathedral at Sens. I suspect that clerical wit—with a rather sharp edge to it—was concerned in thus preserving the saint's bones in a silk textile decorated with hunting beasts of the kind he specially detested.

salvation of souls. The age was too robust to submit to the intolerable inference that the world given by God to man as his habitation is a poor place to be abandoned at the first possible moment for Paradise. Such a view placed too great a strain on human nature. The secular world reacted from the extreme monastic idea in most unseemly violence (confessors must have been men of tough fibre to cope with the sins of ruling lords and barons), and heresy reached formidable dimensions as, we shall see, among the Albigensians, the followers of Pierre de Bruys, and other sectaries. Abélard, as I have shown elsewhere, expresses one aspect of the spirit of his age as much as St. Bernard expresses another. The spirit of man, in spite of the religious mould into which society was cast, was out for adventure, and the spirit of artistic adventure flourished in the cloister.

So any judgment of this vexed question of symbolism in sculpture must, I think, take count of both sides of the picture. Unfortunately, we know very few particulars about the actual details of church building and how the daily work was organised. It is reasonable to suppose that a general iconographic plan was drawn up for the decoration of a church, and that the monks who supervised the work took counsel with the sculptors as to the subject-matter. The Mirrors and Bestiaries and other volumes in the library of the monastery would supply the themes, and their illuminations suggestions as to designs. But I think that the whole scheme of work was very elastic; that the sculptors, who, be it remembered, were often laymen and not monks, were given—or took—a free hand; and that some of their finest work was determined not by religious symbolism, but by sheer joy of the artist in his own creation. It is impossible to dogmatise or lay down any general rule. Many currents swept through the age, and the same principles were not always uppermost. Personally, I find it impossible to believe that every fantastic group of mythical men and beasts has a moral meaning. Great art will never submit to the trammels of an exacting symbolism. The sculpture of the twelfth century breathes too virile and original a spirit to be the

product of a rigid plan. An iconographical framework—yes—but great liberty of expression within it. Take, for instance, the superb capitals of the Tones and Seasons at Cluny described in Chapter VIII. Music and the Works of the Months figure in Vincent de Beauvais' Mirror of Science, and the imagination of the Cluny capitals came no doubt from some traditional source. But the men and women of those capitals breathe a spirit not of piety, but of noble and gracious life. They testify to all that is highest in man's creative powers and to the dignity and beauty latent in human existence. To St. Bernard, who rode all day beside the Lake of Geneva and never once was conscious of water or mountain or the beauty of the scene, art was anathema. It was waste of time to think of earth when the terrible doom of the Judgment Day lay between it and Heaven. But the great art of the twelfth century did not scorn the earth given to us as our home wherein to learn of the things of God, and, consciously or unconsciously, found in the full development of our human capacities the real ladder of perfection reaching up to Heaven.

PART II

BURGUNDY

CHAPTER VI

DIJON AND THE DUKES OF BURGUNDY

If you want to study Romanesque architecture in France, where should you begin ?

I answer without hesitation—Burgundy. Normandy, of course, lies across the Channel, and is easy of access to an English traveller. But the Norman school of Romanesque can be studied as conveniently in England as in France, and in both countries lacks the wealth of sculpture and special features found elsewhere. Burgundy is, I maintain, the natural base of Romanesque art. Not only can it be reached easily by road or rail from Paris, but historically Burgundy, thanks to Cluny, was the province from which art and culture radiated over Europe during the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Therefore, in this book, we will travel first to Dijon, and from the excellent strategic position of the Hôtel de la Cloche survey the scene. Cluny itself lies a long way to the south near Mâcon, and, though historically there is much to be said for beginning with an account of the famous abbey, it is important to realise a page still earlier in architectural development preserved for us at Dijon in the church of St. Bénigne. Further, Dijon is a convenient centre for seeing a variety of places, and is itself a delightful town full of interest. Travellers to the south of France sweep through it in their thousands during the night. Only a few are sufficiently enterprising to leave the train and explore the unsuspected beauties of the old Duchy of Burgundy, its churches, castles, and vineyards.

The provincial towns of France must be the envy of every English visitor. The English, though not backward in thinking well of themselves, have had very little power of expressing their gifts in building. An instinct for architecture seems to be more in the blood of the Latin

races, and even the smaller French cities have often a sense of space and dignity denied to our own wealthy towns. Dijon is happily situated on the slopes of the famous Côte d'Or, at a point where the little hills are merged in the green valley of the Saône. This fertile plain stretches for nearly fifty miles due east, till the Jura Mountains block the far horizon. On a fine day it is said Mont Blanc can be seen from Dijon by energetic persons content to climb its steeples and towers. Golden by name and golden by nature is this smiling land, famed for its wine and its food. All along the slopes of the Côte d'Or lie vineyards with household names—Chambertin, Clos-Vougeot, Nuits, Pommard, Volnay, and others no less great. "Perish Pussyfoot!" will exclaim the tourist who finds himself in these genial latitudes, where sunshine, good temper, and the fruit of the vine all combine to make life pleasant. It's a fat and prosperous country, not on a large scale so far as scenery is concerned, but lying wide and smiling under the vault of Heaven.

Vines, it must be owned, do not improve a landscape. For half the year their stakes make a hillside look like a porcupine. But there is much beautiful and delicate scenery in Burgundy, low rolling hills, wooded slopes, and little rivers of great charm—a kindly place with kindly people, where numerous country houses tell their own tale of local prosperity. It is not difficult to understand why so genial a land favoured the growth of arts and culture. In no part of France does life seem to fall on more pleasant lines for the people at large.

The history of Burgundy goes back to the dawn of civilisation in France. Dijon was a Gallo-Roman centre, and Christianity made its appearance early in the third century. We catch glimpses about that date of a figure more legendary than historical—St. Bénigne—the first Christian missionary in the province, who was duly martyred. His name survives in the famous church built and rebuilt by the piety of successive generations. The early records of the province concern a confused struggle for supremacy between Normans, Saracens, Franks, and the first kings of Burgundy. But early in the eleventh

century Dijon, as the seat of the dukes of Burgundy, entered on a great and splendid phase in its history. From 1363 to 1477 Dijon, under four famous dukes, Philippe le Hardi, Jean sans Peur, Philippe le Bon, and Charles le Téméraire, was a ducal court, second to none in Europe in power and magnificence. Few facts in history are more striking than the gradual absorption by the kings of France sitting in Paris of the semi-independent states, nominally vassals, but in fact haughty and troublesome rivals. One by one we see them eaten up. Philip Augustus cheered on the Albigensian Crusade, kept out of it himself, and seized Toulouse and Languedoc at the end. Artois, Maine, and Provence all fell into the rapacious lap of Louis XI. That monarch, as able as he was perfidious, was out—quite rightly, it must be admitted, in the interests of a united France—to break the power of the vassal states whose allegiance to the Crown was less than nominal. To that end he encouraged parliaments and other measures that increased the political influence of the bourgeoisie as against that of the nobles.

In this game of setting class against class, Louis was remarkably successful. Unattractive as a man, he had the root of the matter in him so far as creating a strong French nation was concerned. At the principle of self-determination as laid down in our own days, he would have scoffed in no uncertain terms. The weakness of a vassal state was the opportunity of the King of France. The last Duke of Burgundy, Charles le Téméraire, fell in battle at Nancy in 1477. During the subsequent confusion Louis XI. stepped in and confirmed the ancient privileges of Burgundy and its Parliament. But henceforth sovereignty rested in fact as well as name with the King of France. Dijon, no longer a semi-royal capital, was still an influential provincial town. In the eighteenth century she entered anew into a brilliant and prosperous phase. The noble houses and spacious proportions of the existing town are a happy legacy of this period. The famous Place d'Armes is overlooked by the group of eighteenth-century buildings that stand on the site of the old palace of the dukes of Burgundy. A few rooms of

this palace are preserved in the later structure where the Hôtel de Ville and the Museum are now lodged. The Cour d'Honneur is flanked to the right by the Tour de Bar, and here a massive mediæval tower survives to cast disapproving glances on the elegance of the later Renaissance buildings. The Place d'Armes itself lies in a great semicircle in front of the Cour d'Honneur, and is a dignified Place surrounded by colonnades. This is still a central point of life in Dijon. And—a word in the ear of the gourmet—when you are tired of sight-seeing and the inner man calls for refreshment, seek and you will find a restaurant in the neighbourhood where you will be served with food and drink worthy of the dukes of Burgundy themselves. I withhold the name, for those with spirits tuned to the quest will find it, and I deem it a place too high for the austere souls who even in France hanker for a bun and glass of milk at lunch.

Considerable though is the charm of eighteenth-century Dijon, the building of real importance to our story is the famous church of St. Bénigne. This church stands at the head waters of the Romanesque style, and as such deserves the closest attention from all lovers of twelfth-century architecture. The crypt of St. Bénigne brings us at once in touch with Cluny and its abbots. Raoul Glaber, when writing about " l'aube blanche des églises " with which the world was covering itself, goes on to say that one of the men most zealous in his labours to beautify the House of God was William, Abbot of St. Bénigne. Though a great servant of the Cluniac order, he was not by birth a Frenchman. William of Volpiano was the son of noble Italian parents, and as an oblate child had been dedicated from the age of eight to the service of God. St. Mayeul, a famous Abbot of Cluny, when travelling in Italy, had made the acquaintance of William, then a young Benedictine monk. Ties of sympathy and affection soon sprang up between the younger and the older man, and on Mayeul's return to Burgundy in 985 William went with him. Some years later this same monk was sent from Cluny by St. Mayeul to reform the monastery of St. Bénigne at Dijon, where discipline had grown slack. He was also charged with the duty of rebuilding the sixth-century basilica.

William of Volpiano set about this task in no mean spirit. He must have been in every respect a remarkable man—brilliant, cultured, humane. His Italian origin is very significant, and no less the fact, expressly stated, that on his mission to Dijon he took with him as assistants the nine Italian monks, " versés dans toutes les sciences," mentioned on page 41. Italy has known throughout the ages how to protect her treasures and her art, even when Barbarian invaders were abroad. Ravenna, as we saw, was a bridge over which the culture of Byzantium passed into Italy, and from Italy into France. Lombardy, in particular, brought important influences to bear on the revival of architecture in France. There was a great deal of coming and going across the Alps. The Cluniac discipline had been established in Italy early in the tenth century. The abbots of Cluny made light of journeys and visitations to their daughter houses in other parts of Europe. Equally anxious were Greek and Roman priests and bishops to visit, and often to reside for months in, the famous Burgundian monasteries. That Lombard and Byzantine influences are marked in the Burgundian churches built at the time is only natural, and in William of Volpiano they had a puissant missionary.

At Dijon, therefore, between the years 1000 and 1015 Abbot William built a church whose glories made a profound impression on the ancient chroniclers. We read with an indescribable pang of envy of its columns of marble, brèche, and granite, of its 371 capitals richly decorated with varied ornaments and Biblical scenes, of its altars of rare stones, its reliquaries of gold and silver.

Save the narthex and an east end rotunda with radiating chapels, all this magnificence was destroyed by fire in 1271. The Revolution saw to it that the narthex and rotunda, preserved till that date, should perish as a votive offering to Liberty. The present church is a good example of early Burgundian Gothic, but the real interest of St. Bénigne today lies in the crypt. May I beg that no reader of these pages who visits Dijon will fail to ring the sacristy bell on the south side of the aisle and penetrate underground into one of the most interesting relics in France. For here are

preserved the beginnings of the great art that flowers at Autun, Vézelay, and elsewhere. A candle or an electric torch discreetly smuggled in is a help. Crypts naturally are not well lighted, and the extraordinary carvings at St. Bénigne are not easy to see on a dark day.

Abbot William built his new church on a site of great sanctity. The relics, real or apocryphal, of St. Bénigne had been preserved by the faithful at Dijon from an early date. The saint was buried in a rude stone coffin, and the base of this, sunk in a cavity, still marks the ancient resting-place or "confession" of the martyr. Over this confession or crypt, a church, or rather a succession of churches, had been built in the course of centuries. All this was remodelled by William of Volpiano on a large scale, and the crypt transformed by a rotunda. Italian influence is obvious in the plan. The upper church followed the same lines and must have been a remarkable building. If it has disappeared, we have cause for thankfulness that hazard has at least preserved the crypt. A series of columns support the rotunda of the crypt and form an extraordinary page in the history of art. I know of nothing in sculpture comparable with the monstrous decoration of these capitals. The workmanship is rude and primitive. The chisel is only learning its work, but to what hag-ridden imagination does it not seek to give expression! The interlaced beasts of the twelfth century are tame domestic animals side by side with their forerunners at Dijon. Horrible suggestions of the human figure appear with suggestions, no less horrible, of the animal world. One capital consists of a monstrous squat figure, repeated on three sides, the fourth side being filled by a bird. The arms of the figure turn into beasts and birds, and these in turn lose themselves in a tangle of devouring monsters one on the top of another. At each angle comes a figure with a tiny head and grotesque body. Lions, dragons, horses, birds, are all suggested. Another capital shows a creature more like a gorilla than a man, with great paws thrust upwards carrying the weight of the abacus. Another, again, shows a deformed figure with a huge head enclosed in an oval, surrounded in turn by what, at

first sight, look like lotus flowers on long stems, but are apparently palm leaves. If this is sculpture in its youth, it is dreaming very evil dreams.

Both the narthex of St. Bénigne, with its finely carved doorway, and also the rotunda were razed to the ground during the French Revolution. To escape intact the triple terror of the wars of religion, the Revolution, and the restorer, is a happy fate to which few buildings in France can aspire. Well pleased, no doubt, with tearing down works of art so priceless as the famous sculpture of the porch and the rare rotunda, the revolutionaries flung the rubbish into the crypt, thereby serving the double end of disposal and destruction. The crypt, thus choked, was preserved from further damage, and has now been restored intact to its original state. There seems some uncertainty about the date of the carvings I have described. Archæologists hesitate to commit themselves as to whether they belong to the early years of the eleventh century, or whether William preserved in his rotunda some existing columns of an earlier date. So cautious an archæologist as Monsieur de Lasteyrie takes the latter view. The question is one of great interest for the origins of Romanesque sculpture. And for this reason I stress the interest and importance of a visit to St. Bénigne for those who will see the art in its great and beautiful developments elsewhere.

Were the 371 capitals of the upper church, destroyed by fire in 1271, carved after the fashion of the crypt? Or were these terrifying monsters that kept watch and ward over the bones of St. Bénigne due to some *macabre* twist in the mind of their sculptor? To this question, unfortunately, there is no reply. We are left to speculate over the why and wherefore here as in other places. Some fragments of twelfth-century sculpture from the porch are preserved in the Musée Archæologique at Dijon, in particular a curious and moving bas relief of the Last Supper and one of Christ in glory surrounded by symbols of the Evangelists. The Apostles are grouped round a table, some standing, some sitting. St. John, with an indescribable gesture of sorrow, sits with bowed head on the Saviour's

breast. Below the table Judas, a crouched demoniacal figure, offers a fish to the Lord. This bas relief probably dates from the early part of the twelfth century when Burgundian sculpture is on the threshold of its triumphs. The draperies are already executed with considerable skill and freedom, the grouping is dignified and severe. Personally, I prefer it to the conventional, if more finely executed, Christ in glory of somewhat later date, though the seraphim—long, elegant figures in the true Burgundian style—who support the mandorla that holds the seated Christ are as fine in feeling as in workmanship.

St. Bénigne has interesting associations with the civic life of Dijon. Feeling for local self-government was strong in Burgundy, and the people clung tenaciously to rights conferred by their own Parliament. To St. Bénigne, therefore, came the dukes of Burgundy on their accession, to receive before the High Altar the oath of fidelity from the mayor and aldermen, and to swear in their turn to preserve intact the privileges of the city. And as the Doge was wedded at Venice to the sea, so the Duke of Burgundy was wedded to the town of Dijon by a ring placed on his hand by the abbot at the end of this great ceremony.

There are other churches in Dijon well worth a visit. Notre Dame, terribly mutilated though are the sculptures of its façade, is an admirable example of Burgundian Gothic. From the rude beginnings of the crypt of St. Bénigne to the arcades and friezes of Notre Dame decorated with gargoyles, animals, and fantastic beings, a long step has been made in the history of sculpture. Here again we are confronted by that preoccupation with demons which must have been a real obsession in the Middle Ages. Above the porch, with its three doors deeply recessed, runs a double tier of arcades. From every niche and corner, demons and monsters and tortured human figures look down on the street below. In the middle of this nightmare scene is the figure of a woman who, with distracted gestures, appeals for pity and release from the infernal troop. There is nothing pleasant or attractive in this phantasy. Gothic demons, so it seems to me, are worse than their Romanesque brethren, because more realistic and human. In

the earlier period, generally speaking, stylisation, as it is called, is uppermost, and the beasts are too far removed from actual life to give one bad dreams. Not so the gargoyles resting on their elbows who thrust horrid semi-human heads far over the parapet and seem ready for any devilry. Beware, parenthetically let me say, of Gothic gargoyles after a heavy shower, for their knack of pouring large quantities of water on an unsuspecting head below reflects, so I cannot help feeling, some impish spirit of mischief in the Middle Ages. Playing tricks on learned and distinguished people must have been a welcome reaction from long-drawn-out thoughts of Hell.

I hope, too, that all travellers will duly admire the beautiful Renaissance façade of St. Michael—a perfect example of its kind. The dignity and grace of Renaissance work is a welcome relief after Gothic in its later and over emphatic mood. With the classical spirit values long obscured return to the world. It is a narrow form of intellectual snobbery, not culture, that leads some people to concentrate on one expression of art at the expense of others. Preferences, naturally, we all have, but to kiss the joy not only as it flies, but where it flies, is the secret of art as well as life.

But whatever the merits of the churches, the great, magnificent, and obvious lions of Dijon are the tombs of the dukes of Burgundy, transferred now from their original home at the Chartreuse de Champmol to the Museum. The Museum—perhaps the finest provincial collection in France—is housed, as we saw, in the eighteenth-century buildings on the site of the old Burgundian palace. The Salle des Gardes of the earlier period is happily preserved, and there in great state and dignity lie the sculptured images of Philippe le Hardi and Jean sans Peur. These tombs are incredibly magnificent. To me, at least, there is always something tragic and futile in the challenge flung at death by men who hope, through miracles of stone or brass, to perpetuate their names. When you have been a great man and a great prince, it is no doubt poor work to die and to take up no more room in the world than that filled by the grave of any humble peasant. A fine tomb

seems to offer one way out of the difficulty and to keep up your prestige. But the precise and polished lines of Gray utter an uncomfortable truth. The silent dust remains silent, however insistent the voice of honour, and death turns a chilly ear to the flattery even of genius. I am bound to say, however, that in so far as this situation can be carried off at all, the dukes of Burgundy seem to have done it. Impressive, no doubt, in life, they remain impressive in death. There are memorials more beautiful than these tombs with their marble and gilt and brilliant colours. There are none that convey more sense of arrogant splendour imposing itself long after the poor dust has crumbled.

Philippe le Hardi, a carved figure of heroic size, lies in solitary splendour on a great tomb of black marble more than nine feet long. His marriage with Margaret of Flanders was unhappy, and, judging by the lady's face preserved for us at Champmol, he must in life have required all his titular courage to cope with her. Anyway, in death he took his revenge by a refusal to let her share his tomb, a marital post-mortem slap that no doubt went home. The duke, splendid in robes and armour, lies with his feet on a couchant lion, his head on a marble pillow. Two delightful angels, with outspread arms, support his helmet. Round the sides of the black marble base is a carved Gothic arcade in white marble, with a network of angels, columns, and capitals. In the cloister, so formed, are no less than forty little figurines, each some 20 inches high. These are the famous *pleurants*, both civil and religious, who mourn the death of the duke, and very marvellous they are. The white marble of the statuettes is happily contrasted with the black marble of the tomb and the paint and gilt of the recumbent figure. Each little figure is a study in itself. The different countenances reflect a variety of emotions — sorrow, dignity, calm indifference. The whole procession is a work of vivid realism, as it moves, or appears to move, round the base of the duke's tomb. The company, though dressed in monastic fashion, were not all of them, so it would seem, monks. Philippe le Hardi died at Brussels in 1404, and his funeral procession took six weeks on the journey from

Brussels to Dijon. A curious document exists,* which shows that 2,000 ells of black cloth were bought for the mourners, and that not only ecclesiastics, but the duke's sons, relatives, and household officers, each dressed in a black cowl, followed the coffin on foot. Whatever the conventions of the age in the matter of mourning, so prolonged a funeral must have been a sore trial to courtiers, forced to tread in mud and dust the long and weary road from Flanders to Burgundy. The incident of the black cloth bought for the court disposes of the theory that the *pleurants* on Philippe le Hardi's tomb represented only clerics and monks. On his tomb, as at his funeral, he is surrounded by his family and household. The tombs were knocked about during the Revolution, and when restored the statuettes were replaced as best might be, and not in their original order. It is probable that at Champmol, bishops and acolytes led the cortège, and priests and monks closed it.

A famous name, that of Claus Sluter, is associated with this tomb. Sluter, who apparently started life as a working mason, came to Burgundy about 1385. The church of the Chartreuse at Champmol was founded by Philippe le Hardi in order to provide a suitable burial-place for the dukes of Burgundy. Ideas of suitability and splendour necessarily went hand in hand, and the *atelier*, formed under the direction of Drouet de Dammartin and Jean de Marville, had a great influence on the development of fifteenth-century sculpture far beyond the limits of Burgundy. To this *atelier* came Claus Sluter, "souverain tailleur d'images," as he was to be known later. His origin is obscure. Some say he was a Dutchman. Monsieur Michel thinks from his work that he was of German origin. Unquestionably he was a man of genius, as we shall see for ourselves a little later on at the Chartreuse. Sluter became, in due course, head of the *atelier* at Champmol. But he cannot have had much to do with the tomb of Philippe le Hardi, for the sculptor did not long survive the duke, who died in 1404. A design of the tomb had been prepared by Sluter's predecessor, Jean de Marville,

* Mâle, "L'Art Religieux de la fin du Moyen Age en France," p. 415.

and the work was carried out by his nephew and disciple, Claus de Werve. Poor Claus de Werve was a man of many troubles; indeed, the whole record of Champmol is a curious story of delay, irritation, and disappointment. Even mediæval dukes seem to have suffered from dilatory workmen, and the tombs were on hand a surprising number of years. This is specially so with the subsequent monument of Jean sans Peur and his wife, Marguerite de Bavière.

Claus de Werve had finished the tomb of Philippe le Hardi in 1411, and had received a commission from the new duke for a second tomb on the same lines as the first. But twenty-eight years later, at his death in 1439, little or no progress had been made with the work. In 1443 it is clear that the ducal family felt that strong measures were necessary, and a Spaniard, Juan la Huerta, was imported from Aragon. La Huerta proved as dilatory as his predecessors and far more of a scamp. He vanished from the scene in 1462, and Antoine le Monturier was called in to make good his *laches*. Le Monturier, at least, deserves the credit for putting an end to this exasperating record of delay. He finished the second tomb and installed it at the Chartreuse in 1470, no less than sixty years after the project was first set on foot. In design, the tomb of Jean sans Peur follows closely that of Philippe le Hardi, save that there are two figures, not one, on the black marble slab, and it is still more charged with ornament. It is in fact a copy, and not a very satisfactory copy, of the original. Sixty years had elapsed since Sluter worked at Champmol, and taste had grown more florid during the interval. The tomb is still a marvel in execution, and still a *tour de force*, but the ornament has become even less restrained than before. I have said many hard things in this book about restorations and restorers. The more gladly, therefore, do I pay my tribute to the astonishing skill with which these monuments, broken up like so many others at the Revolution, have been restored to their pristine state of splendour.

On the walls of the Salle des Gardes are two fine Flemish retables, also brought from the Chartreuse at Champmol.

Again the gilt, the colours, the richness of the sculptured saints under their canopies go to reinforce that general impression of magnificence made on us by these monuments. It is, however, a tragedy that they have been torn from their original setting.

On a mild spring afternoon we took a one-horse victoria and ambled peacefully, at a pace unknown to motors, to the gates of the Chartreuse at Champmol. Champmol, nowadays, is hardly suburban: modern Dijon stretches to its walls. If the ducal tombs have found a dignified resting-place in the Salles des Gardes of their former palace, a fate less happy has overtaken the Chartreuse, once designed as their splendid resting-place. The dukes of Burgundy, like many people before and since, were anxious to keep on good terms with both worlds. To that end Philippe le Hardi founded, in March, 1395, in his domain at Champmol, "une maison lieu et couvent pour vingt-quatre moines, et cinq autres frères lais et leur prieur de l'ordre de Chartreuse." To indulge in earthly pomp while founding convents where other people prayed for your sins was a practice very frequent in the Middle Ages. Kings were punctilious in their recognition of spiritual authority, and whatever the immorality of their lives, believed devoutly in a vicarious practice of the virtues of poverty, chastity, and obedience. Philippe le Hardi, therefore, dedicated his Chartreuse "à la gloire et louange de Dieu et de la Sainte Trinité, et de tous les Saints et les Saintes," and pays his tribute to "les sacrifices et autres oraisons des religieuses et dévotes personnes qui, pour amour de Dieu, ont élu volontairement pauvreté, délaissé tous honneurs, richesses, et autres vanités et délices mondaines."

The church of the Chartreuse, destined to house such august dust as that of the dukes of Burgundy, was designed and carried out on magnificent lines. Not only Burgundy, but France, Flanders, and the Netherlands, were ransacked for masons, sculptors, and artists. Under Claus Sluter's direction, the fame of the *atelier* spread throughout France. Strictly speaking, however, it is not a French school, but bears the hall-mark of Germany and the Low

Countries. A remarkable monument of Sluter's genius is preserved at Champmol in the famous Puits de Moïse. That, and a few carvings on the doorway of the church, is all that remains today of the buildings, statues, stained glass, goldsmiths' work, paintings, that made Champmol famous in the fifteenth century. Destroyed and ravaged at the Revolution, the Chartreuse was rebuilt in 1843, and has since been used as a lunatic asylum. An indefinable air of gloom and sadness hung over the neglected grounds, and this in spite of the joy of the early spring and the song of the lark above. We found all that remains of Claus Sluter's work, the base of a Calvary standing surprisingly enough in a well at the lower end of the garden. The Calvary was rebuilt in the centre of the cloisters, but the cloisters have vanished and also the group of figures depicting the agony of Christ. The head of the Saviour alone is preserved in the Museum at Dijon. But round the hexagonal base stand six great statues of the prophets of the Old Law—Moses, David, Jeremiah, Zechariah, Daniel, and Isaiah—and at each angle a weeping angel with outspread wings.

These statues were carried out by Claus Sluter and Claus de Werve between 1395 and 1406, and are unique in the Middle Ages. They forestall the Renaissance by a hundred years or more. Indeed, Sluter's work left on me the impression of a fourteenth-century Bernini. The figures are astonishingly vigorous and realistic. Each prophet appears as a great and poignant personality. Scroll in hand, they point to the prophecies which foretold the Crucifixion. The figures are as realistic on a large scale as the *pleurants* on the tombs. The piety of the fifteenth century was greatly concerned with the Passion. The mystery plays of the hour dwelt on every aspect of the sacred drama, and the same tendency appears in plastic art. In Sluter's masterpiece, the prophets of the Old Law stand round the base of the Calvary and lament the death of the Lord. Grief is written on every countenance. Moses, a majestic figure, carries the book of the Law; David leans on his harp, too sad for music; Zechariah and Jeremiah are bowed with sorrow; Daniel with a gesture turns to the

aged Isaiah and points to the accomplishment of the prophecy on his scroll. No less intense is the grief of the beautiful weeping angels at the corners of the hexagon. This is realism in sculpture carried to a very high pitch. The whole impression left by the Puits de Moïse is surprising, and indeed bewildering for a work of art on the very threshold of the fifteenth century. There is complete mastery of the technique of carving, and current fashions are reflected in the draperies that fall in heavy folds about the statues.

The same qualities are noticeable in the sculptures that decorate the doorway of the chapel. Kneeling benefactors, presented by a patron saint to the Powers of Heaven, came into fashion as a form of decoration during the twelfth century, and the theme is common in the stained glass of the period. At Champmol we have a most realistic Virgin, who stands, Babe in arms, on the central pillar of the door. To the left kneels Philippe le Hardi, presented to the Queen of Heaven by St. John the Baptist; to the right, Marguerite de Flandre, his wife, presented by St. Catherine. The faces are represented with almost brutal realism. Sluter has certainly not gone out of his way to flatter the duchess. "Madame de Bourgogne était fort absolue et assez méchante," writes Froissart crisply of this lady. The peevish-looking shrew who kneels at the portal of the church makes one feel sorry for Philippe le Hardi. His wish to have his tomb to himself becomes understandable in the light of his consort's countenance.

Champmol marks a moment in history as in art when great changes are at hand. Renaissance and Reformation are drawing near; the spell of the Middle Ages is broken. Claus Sluter and his school stand on the threshold of new developments that lie beyond the many digressions of a book primarily concerned with the twelfth century. But no sensible traveller will allow any statute of limitations to circumscribe his interests in a country the very richness of whose intellectual content compels a writer more or less to specialise. France is prodigal from age to age in new ideas that she takes and makes, and sometimes breaks.

With her flair and almost unerring sense of quality in all that concerns the fine arts, she reflects, as in a mirror, the intellectual processes of Europe. Hence, throughout the changes that have gone to the making of the modern world, she has built as lavishly as, alas! she has destroyed recklessly. Be it art in its splendid and austere forms at Vézelay and Chartres; be it some frivolous ornament of the court of Louis XV., her mind, turn by turn, has dwelt on both extremes and on every varying stage between them. Exasperating she may be at times in politics and practical affairs, but in all that concerns intellectual and æsthetic values, rich in gifts and in experience. A nation counts in the life of the world, not by its ephemeral victories and defeats, but by the abiding contribution it has made to the sum total of knowledge and beauty. And France, if at times wayward, is a noble branch of the Tree Igdrasil, wide waving, many-toned, with roots deep down in the past and leaves stretching upwards to the stars.

CHAPTER VII

CLUNY—PART I.: THE RISE.

Mâcon is a pleasant country place on the banks of the Saône. The river sweeps by it in noble fashion and bends round the houses and willow-fringed meadows with an air of protection. The town is set in a typical Burgundian landscape of low hills and vineyards. Soil red as though stained with its own wine, farms and houses with madder-coloured roofs, orchards and green fields laughing in the sunshine as spring overcomes the resistance of winter, all combine to make a countryside full of quiet beauty. There is nothing remarkable about Mâcon, but it is a convenient halting-place on the main line, with a good inn from which Cluny, sixteen miles distant, can be visited with ease.

Cluny, once a name of fame in Europe, stands now for the greatest crime in the history of building. Vandalism and destruction are constant and melancholy factors through the ages, and I have, alas! to speak often of the havoc they have wrought in France. But for sheer wickedness there is nothing to equal the destruction of the great church at Cluny, an evil deed carried out not in a moment of revolutionary madness, but coldly and deliberately over a term of years between 1797 and 1812. Before St. Peter's at Rome was built, Cluny was the largest church in the world. It was unquestionably one of the most magnificent ever raised, both in the grandeur of its proportions and the wealth of its sculpture and decoration. This church, one of the possessions of Christendom and the key, moreover, to a host of now insoluble problems, was standing practically intact at the beginning of the nineteenth century. It is very difficult to write in temperate language about the ignoble beings masquerading as sons of liberty who tore the abbey to pieces during the Revolution, and since the

twelfth-century masonry resisted their miserable efforts, finally blew the building up with seventy-five charges of gunpowder.

Today, of the famous abbey once the intellectual centre of Europe, nothing remains but a fragment of the southern transept, a tower, the fifteenth-century Bourbon Chapel, and a little town that cowers shamefacedly (as well it may) among the ruins of the vast Benedictine demesne. But, though a painful pilgrimage, the glorious fragments of sculpture preserved in the Museum at Cluny are sufficient reward for an out-of-the-way journey. Even the casual tourist may well feel his imagination stirred by the memories that haunt this remote and beautiful Burgundian valley. Cluny was the very pulse of the machine in the twelfth century. From its abbey, culture, letters, and art spread throughout Europe. It is as a great humanist institution rather than as an ecclesiastical establishment that it commands our admiration today. Though few traces remain of its splendour, this humble little town on the banks of the Grosne was a beacon light to civilisation. In its beginning as in its end it marks the dawn and close of an era. Cluny is founded as the Feudal System takes shape; it expires with the Revolution. During many centuries the vicissitudes of the abbey mark the ebb and flow of temporal and ecclesiastical power in France. Its history is a long record of that transition, slow but sure, through which authority passes from the religious to the secular arm.

It calls for a real effort of imagination to connect the obscure commune now called Cluny with the wealth and splendour of the powerful Benedictine monastery feared by kings and favoured by popes. The twelfth century, formative period though it was, abounds in contradictions; among them none are greater than those concerned with the monastic life. Monasticism is a puzzling way of life to a generation almost completely out of touch with the values that made it possible. And the recurrent breakdowns in the system itself, the constant charges of laxity and corruption, the reiterated demands for reform, all this goes to show that even in its palmy days the monastic ideal, despite its saints, proved too hard an enterprise for

the average run of men and women. That it made its greatest appeal to the wealthy and the well-born is evident. The Cloister was to a special degree the refuge of noble and prince—it is sometimes suggested that the indefinable qualities of race could alone support the stringencies of monastic discipline and the hardships of the life. Be that as it may, it is evident that here as elsewhere the nobles led and the general public followed.

I referred on page 21 to the origins of monasticism in Egypt and the ascetic practices that grew up in the Nile Valley. St. Benedict, the founder of organised monasticism, was born near Spoleto in 480, and after some years of retirement at Subiaco established the first community of monks at Monte Cassino in 527. St. Benedict, as we saw, softened the early rigours of ascetic practice in Egypt. Communal life, to exist at all, had to make some compromises with practical existence. Further, as the movement developed it is clear that a rule of life bearable in the warm climate of the Nile Valley would prove impossible in the chilly latitudes of Northern and Western Europe. The Benedictine rule spread rapidly over the whole of Europe and took firm root in France. The Merovingian kings were pious and superstitious, and encouraged the growth of religious establishments. But a cry for reform, a cry be it said that invariably arose from the more ardent spirits within the system, soon made itself heard. When the eleventh century dawned, the first successes of the Benedictine rule had faded into drab indiscipline, distressing to the religious spirits of the time. About this time William, Duke of Aquitaine, a pious and wealthy prince, found himself painfully afflicted by the lack of true religious fervour in his surroundings. With his friend Bernon, Abbot of Baume, he sought a secluded spot for the establishment of a religious house, carrying out very strict discipline. In the valley of the Grosne he found an ideal site, hemmed in by wooded hills, a valley so remote from human society, so full of peace and repose that it was in some respects an image of the celestial solitude. Even so the duke demurred to possible interruptions from the chase. " Drive away the hounds and bring monks in their

place," replied Bernon, " for there is more profit in prayer than sport." The duke's scruples were thus overcome, and Bernon with twelve other monks set up the first modest chapel and monastery at Cluny in 910.

The community thus started was to develop on lines little contemplated by its founder. Culture, it is true, was to have a place in William of Aquitaine's foundation, but austerity was to be the great aim of the new foundation. A rule of silence was strictly enjoined. It is a little difficult to grasp from the accounts of the early history of Cluny why this remote religious house, founded with a view to complete solitude from the world, should have grown so rapidly in wealth and importance. Neither is it clear how the great humanist development took place within its walls. Certainly Cluny in its hour of fame was not remarkable either for austerity or silence.

The curious reactions of disorder on piety are illustrated by the post-Carolingian period. In a world the insecurity of which had become intolerable, men's minds turned from the perversity of things temporal to the sure rock of faith. But I cannot escape the belief that a small minority of people, whose presence is felt rather than heard, were profoundly bored by the pious practices of their age. Certain active and able spirits, though they bowed to the fashion of the cloister, transformed the cloister to their own uses and made of it a channel of statecraft and of art no less than of religion. In some such reason we may find an explanation of the surprising growth of Cluny during the tenth century till it emerges in the eleventh century as the intellectual leader of Europe. Four great abbots, St. Mayeul (of whom we heard at Dijon as the friend of William of Volpiano), St. Odilon, St. Hugh, and Peter the Venerable, carried the fame of the order to its highest point. Monastic influence was encouraged by the absence of a strong central power in France. The King of France wielded little more authority than the heads of his own vassal states. While princes wasted their strength in feuds, the Church carried out a consistent policy that made for power and prestige.

Between Cluny and Rome a tie always near was naturally drawn closer when Cluniac monks were found on the papal

throne. The famous Hildebrand, afterwards Gregory VII., was trained at Cluny; so, too, were Urban II., Paschal II., and Urban V. Cluny in the eleventh and twelfth centuries recognised no allegiance to the King of France. Duty and obedience were due to the pope alone. The Abbot of Cluny had his own mint and struck his own money. Cluny was in fact a powerful independent state, and as such incurred the ever growing jealousy of the secular arm from the days of Philip Augustus onwards. So influential had it become that one of its abbots challenged the supremacy of the Abbot of Monte Cassino itself as the head of the order. St. Benedict's early rule had been transformed at Cluny. Manual work and agriculture, though carried on extensively under the direction of the monks, became less obligatory for the individual. Greater stress was laid on prayers and services. Music was encouraged and developed no less than scholarship and the arts.

The political activities of the abbey were pushed in every direction. Each daughter house set up in different parts of Europe was a centre of Cluniac influence. St. Benedict had established his monasteries on an individual foundation. Each house was independent and self-governing. Not so Cluny. The abbots introduced the principle of monasteries grouped under one control. The Cluniac order was governed by an abbot who was absolute ruler of the system and held a position of authority comparable to that of the General among the Jesuits and Dominicans. Priors as heads of subordinate houses held office at his pleasure. Such a system wielded by able men made for great power and authority. In a violent age it must have had many advantages. Also it is pleasant to note that the Cluniac rule throughout Europe was liberal and enlightened. The abbots do not appear to have used their power in any autocratic way. Though wielding a great temporal force, they shone by reason of their care for art and letters. All-important though the services of Cluny to learning in an age otherwise dark, even more valuable was a certain unprejudiced outlook on life which made for the breaking of many chains. The great abbots were philosophers and humanists as well as statesmen.

They entertained on a regal scale, and the vast size of the abbey and its buildings was at times too small to accommodate the followers of popes and kings who were not infrequent visitors. Monarchs and princes heaped riches on the abbey and brought priceless offerings to the church.

I have referred more than once to the real internationalism of the early Middle Ages. It is one of the contradictions of the time that, whatever its violence, educated men were all of one family.* Frontiers had no existence for men of wealth and culture. Our own countrymen were more at home then in France than at any time since. The Royal House of England gave more than one abbot to Cluny. Henry of Worcester, brother of Henry II., was on intimate terms with Peter the Venerable and corresponded with him at length. Correspondence with kings was all in the day's work for an Abbot of Cluny. Alphonse VI. of Spain provided large sums of money towards building the church, the cost of which must have been enormous. Other royal gifts, among them gifts from England, were sent for the same purpose. Agriculture was studied as far as might be on scientific lines, and the abbey estates were cared for no less than the arts.

All this brings before our mind a wonderful picture of wealth and culture, with monastic rigours softened to a very bearable degree. Perhaps the records that remain stress unduly the part played by popes and kings. There are times when we should like to hear less of the splendours of Cluny and more of its practical organisation. The economic problems must have been considerable, calling for sound business aptitude. Consider the correspondence involved for an abbey with hundreds of subordinate houses scattered over the whole of Europe. Cluniac foundations took root, not only in France, England, Germany, and Italy, but in countries as remote as Poland and Hungary. The total of 2,000 dependent abbeys sometimes given is now regarded as an exaggeration.

* Bernard Shaw has dealt with this point graphically in "St. Joan." In the scene where the cynical English nobleman mocks the incipient nationalism of de Stogumber, the chaplain, the author emphasises an historical truth too little realised.

The figure is estimated as 314 houses in the twelfth century and 825 houses in the fifteenth century. Even so, the total was formidable, and the management and direction of establishments in all parts of Europe must have involved considerable machinery of government for the Cluniac General Staff. In army phraseology, there must have been an A and a Q department. Who determined questions of policy and administration? On what lines were the finances carried on? Who looked after the secretariat? The emigration department—for someone must have organised the colonies of monks who went out to found new abbeys, often in remote districts—had clearly to decide policy no less than practical considerations of food and shelter. When great personages, bringing hundreds of followers, came to stay at Cluny, who took charge of the catering and billets? Last, but certainly not least, how were the *ateliers* organised? For, as we have seen, Cluny was a home of the arts, and its monks were past masters in building, sculpture, painting, goldsmiths' work, music, and the special monastic accomplishment of illuminated manuscript.

We can only guess at the answers to many of these questions, but it is clear that operations on such a scale could not have been left to chance, and probably many laymen served the abbey in one capacity or another. It is difficult not to feel how distracting the incessant interruptions of the various offices must have been to men who, so far from spending their days in contemplation, had much active business on hand. Services at Cluny were often very lengthy; we hear of no less than 138 psalms being chanted during the daily offices. The number had to be reduced, we are told, "propter pusillanimorum animos." Such interruptions could not have made for consecutive study any more than for consecutive work. Monasticism during the twelfth century produced great Churchmen, such as St. Bernard, but an original thinker like Abélard was not a product of the cloister. The system did not favour independent thought, and culture in the monk was a measure of the falling away from primitive and ascetic practice.

Of course, too, there were darker sides. Piety was not always triumphant, and individual examples of immorality and irreverence were frequent in spite of papal anathema and priestly terrors. The records of the great abbots of Cluny from 910 to 1157 are interrupted by the extraordinary story of Pontius. His career is significant as showing the substratum of violence even in the cloister, and the fact of conduct staggering in a monk.

Abbot Hugh, who died at a great age in 1109, had ruled the monastery for sixty years. Inevitably discipline had grown slack during the last years of his long reign, and the Chapter felt the need of a vigorous personality to gather up the loose ends. A young man, Pontius de Melgueil, was appointed, therefore, as the new abbot. So little was the true mettle of this unworthy priest suspected, that he impressed his contemporaries as being in all respects worthy of his great office. Special stress was laid on his modesty, his fervour, and his literary gifts. For a time all went well. Pontius maintained the prestige of Cluny in faith, in culture, and in diplomacy. But the devils of vanity and ambition forced an entry into his soul with disastrous consequences to himself and others. Discord spread in the community. The luxury and extravagance of the abbot led to sharp protests from the Chapter. Pontius hastened to Rome, placed his resignation in the hands of the pope, and retired to Jerusalem, where he was accorded signal honours. It is difficult to credit the amazing sequel of the tale. Pontius, wearying of Jerusalem, returned first to Europe, and then by degrees to Burgundy. Collecting a troupe of armed bandits, he fell upon the abbey, put to flight the acting prior, and carried on a campaign of rapine and violence throughout the district. The costly and sacred treasures of the church, crosses, reliquaries, candelabra in gold were seized and melted down to pay the villainous soldiery with whom Pontius terrorised the countryside. The pope, when informed of this state of affairs, launched a terrific anathema against Pontius, who received it with insolent sang-froid. Excommunicated and finally captured, he was taken to Rome, where he died in prison not long afterwards. The community he had

outraged showed singular magnanimity to the man who had troubled their peace. The memory of his earlier virtues and of his fourteen years' rule probably weighed with them. Anyway, his body was brought back to Cluny and buried in the church, where a monument of a man with fettered feet, an amputated hand, and a broken cross told the tale of a great betrayal.

I can only touch briefly on the great controversy of the Cistercians with the Cluniacs that distracted the twelfth century. But the denunciations of St. Bernard are yet again a proof of that constant falling away from grace into luxury deplored by the ardent religious spirits of the day. The Cistercians (the white monks), like the Cluniacs (the black monks), were Benedictines, but in the beginning the Cistercians stood for a far stricter monastic rule. The Puritan spirit, though it dominated the Reformation, was no new principle. It had been a constant factor in the Church as the lives and teaching of many great Catholics bear witness. Criticism and Puritanism are twin spirits whose frequent incursions lend absorbing interest to the religious and intellectual life of the twelfth century, and the abbots of Cluny, liberal-minded statesmen though they were, had perplexing riddles to meet.

It was in 1098 that St. Robert, Abbot of Molesmes, a contemporary of Peter the Venerable, founded the monastery of Citeaux, twelve miles from Dijon, where he and a few kindred spirits desired to follow a rule of life more strict than the easier practice of Cluny. Possibly no more would have been heard of this original handful of Cistercian monks but for the dominating character who joined the order in 1113. St. Bernard was of noble birth, and thirty young Burgundian noblemen followed him to the cloister. Some years later he was sent to found a new house at Vallée d'Absinthe, known as Clairvaux, the monastery with which his name is for ever connected. Great though were the austerities of the white monks as practised at Absinthe, disciples flocked to St. Bernard, and at the time of his death in 1153, 343 Cistercian houses were in existence in different parts of Europe. Austerity was the keynote of the Cistercian revolt. In the eyes of

St. Robert and St. Bernard, the Cluniac monks had become intolerably slack and luxurious, caring more for beauty in art than for piety in religion. It was necessary to revert, and more than revert, to the full rigours of the Benedictine rule as laid down by its founder. Churches and ceremonies were to be purged of all trappings and adornments. The externals of worship were conceived in a spirit as Puritan as that which was to govern the lives of the monks. No gold and silver ornaments were permitted, vestments were to be of linen and fustian. Food and drink were cut down to a minimum, and the luxury of the abbots of Cluny was severely condemned. There was to be no painting, no carving, no decoration in the Cistercian churches. Great stress was laid anew on manual labour and work in the fields. The Cistercians were to work hard, live poor, and eschew every benefit of the capitalist system as practised by the wealthy monastic communities of the time.

Of this the last great effort of monasticism to revert to its primitive practice and austerities, St. Bernard is the apostle and prototype. In that remarkable book "Five Centuries of Religion" Professor Coulton has drawn the character of St. Bernard with a full measure of sympathy and understanding. His picture is that of a very lovable man as well as of a great spiritual leader. That St. Bernard was a soul on fire is a record writ in flaming letters across the history of his times. But we miss in him the spiritual insight and joyous grace that makes St. Francis of Assisi so great an interpreter of the mind of Christ. It is difficult not to feel that, though St. Bernard's motives were pure and exalted, he was a prophet of lost causes, denouncing not only the vices of a slack monasticism, but calling men and women to an ideal of life doomed to failure. Monasticism and all the word implies will always be a way of life to a select few; a way, moreover, full of deep spiritual value and significance. As a rule of life applied to vast numbers of ordinary people it proved a failure even during the ages of faith. The cloister might be a refuge when chaos ruled in the State. But as settled government emerged, bringing order and prosperity in its train, as the communes and

universities rose into power, as the revival of learning spread over Europe, monasticism as a dominant force fell into irrevocable decline. In vain did St. Bernard inveigh against the wealth and the luxury of Cluny. His correspondence with Peter the Venerable is a long indictment of relaxations of the original rule of St. Benedict. Fasts, manual labour, food and clothing, simplicity in church appointments—on all these points he arraigns the Abbot of Cluny. The famous denunciation of sculpture addressed to the Abbot of St. Thierry was no doubt inspired by the magnificence of the abbey church at Cluny and its superb carvings and decoration. The arrival of a letter from St. Bernard could have excited no pleasure at Cluny, but in dealing with his charges, Peter the Venerable showed himself a great Christian and a great gentleman. He reasons with his fiery brother of Clairvaux in a temper wholly admirable. The practices of the abbey are defended with skill and moderation. High words and high feeling between the two orders are deprecated. For it is clear that the Cistercians must have been at times a very handsome thorn in the side of the Cluniacs, and recriminations were mutual. The Cistercians complained that the Cluniacs were lax; the Cluniacs retorted that the Cistercians were Pharisees and bigots. It says much for both men that, in spite of St. Bernard's strictures, the correspondence between himself and Peter the Venerable continued for many years on a note of personal affection and esteem.

Alas for the principles of St. Bernard ! As the years went on the Cistercians, founded and grounded as they were in austerity, became no less wealthy and prosperous and slack than the Cluniacs they attacked. Their churches, though less rich in decoration, were vast and noble fanes of worship. They were not proof, any more than their brother orders, against the evils that lay like a canker at the heart of a monasticism no longer the spiritual practice of a select few, but a powerful ecclesiastical corporation exercising large temporal powers.

Peter the Venerable is a figure not comparable in stature with St. Bernard, yet in the second famous clash between them our sympathies once again are all on the side of the

Abbot of Cluny. The persecution of Abélard by St. Bernard is as significant as the protection extended to him by Peter the Venerable and by Abbot Suger. For Abélard, lover of Héloïse and brilliant scholar, is the incarnation in the twelfth century of the critical and intellectual spirit. He is the forerunner of the modern world with all that the modern world implies. The period was full of intellectual contradictions, and heresy raised its head alongside the multiplication of monks and cloisters. Take, for instance, the doctrines of Pierre de Bruys with which Peter the Venerable was called upon to deal. It is a little startling to find a man who had begun life in a monastery during the first quarter of the twelfth century carrying on propaganda to the effect that baptism was useless, altars superfluous, veneration of the Cross unnecessary, the sacrifice of the Mass without merit, and prayers for the dead futile. To the Albigensians, who held similar views, I shall return later on, and of the growth of heresy throughout the south of France. Hostile criticism was a grave matter for the Churchmen of the day, and we come upon frequent traces of an attitude both sceptical and rebellious.

Abélard was not a heretic in the sense of Pierre de Bruys. But he was a Churchman imbued with the university spirit and with all that spirit implies. Intellectual emancipation was in the air; deliverance sprang at times from unexpected quarters. Professor Coulton points out how free thought had come flooding in with Arab translations of Aristotle and Arab commentaries. But when Abélard's fame spread throughout Europe, the Church took fright. The narrow ecclesiastical view, for which, despite his personal humility and devoutness, St. Bernard stood, received its first great challenge from the teaching of Abélard. Perhaps he was right, too, in a shrewd suspicion of what ultimate mischief lurked in the attitude to art and letters of men like Suger and Peter the Venerable. The love of learning may carry you into strange places abhorrent to an orthodox and rigid theology. Liberality of outlook, the essential gift of education, is incompatible with a tyrannous control of men's minds and souls. The great humanist Churchmen were great just to the extent that they evaded this issue. To

the spiritual values of religion and of Christianity in its best sense the new learning brought no menace. To ecclesiastical formulæ and dogmatic observance its challenge was mortal.

So there is an element of pathos in the great and in many respects noble figure of St. Bernard. In spite of temporary triumphs, he fought a losing battle in defence of a conservative position already undermined by the new influences abroad. Abélard, persecuted and hunted by the Abbot of Clairvaux, found refuge at Cluny under the protection of Peter the Venerable. Abélard was to die a broken man, but he triumphed in death no less surely than St. Bernard failed in victory.

The story of Cluny evokes before the mind's eye a great procession of kings, popes, princes, priests. But no figures are more significant than those of the monk and the scholar, in whose persons we find modernism and reaction engaged in the first rounds of a deadly struggle.

With the death of Pierre le Vénérable the great days of the abbey were over. The thirteenth century, as we have seen, brought new principles and new ideas into the world. The wave of monasticism and monastic ideas began to ebb. Cluny lived on for nearly 600 years, an ever fading shadow of its former self. It suffered heavily in the wars of religion, being sacked by the Huguenots in 1562. Under titular abbots, among them Richelieu and Mazarin, it became a mere pawn in the hand of the throne. The good work in the way of pillage and destruction, begun by the Huguenots, was carried out with great thoroughness by the revolutionaries. It is a dismal tale to tell of the deliberate destruction of the finest church in Europe. But that task must be faced in the next chapter.

CHAPTER VII (*Continued*)

CLUNY—PART II.: THE FALL

The abbey church of Cluny had been rebuilt and enlarged more than once during the first 160 years of its existence, but it was in 1088 that the immense basilica, of which a few walls remain, was begun by St. Hugh. The names of the architects, Gauzon and Hezelon, both monks, have survived. The work progressed rapidly for so vast a building, though it was not completely finished twenty years later when the great abbot died. In 1125 the vault of the nave fell in, but the disaster left the Chapter quite undaunted. The damage was made good, and the work went on again without the accident interfering with the grandiose plan of the church. The choir was consecrated by Urban II. in 1095, and the final consecration of the church took place in 1132, when Innocent II. was at Cluny. It consisted of a nave with double side aisles, double transepts, and five towers. In the first quarter of the thirteenth century the church was further enlarged by the addition of a narthex flanked by two large towers known as the Barabans. Cluny, with its narthex, was no less than 171 metres long—that is to say, 8 metres longer than our own St. Paul's and 12 metres shorter than St. Peter's at Rome. Detailed descriptions of the church have survived its ruin. The decoration was as magnificent as the proportions. A peristyle and a flight of steps led to the portal of the narthex, where a great rose window dominated an ensemble of carved archivolts, pillars, and saints. The narthex had a nave and two side aisles, and led in turn to the principal entrance of the church built by St. Hugh. Here, set in a wealth of stonework and carving, was a tympanum of Christ in Glory surrounded by symbols of the Evangelists. The nave was divided into no less than eleven bays, and had a barrel vault carried on cruciform

pillars. At a time when the technical problems of the vault were so little understood, the audacity of the nave at Cluny takes our breath away. The vaults of the church were carried at a height of 30 metres, and of no less than 33 metres under the principal cupola. The sixty piers of the nave consisted of three engaged columns and a fluted pilaster on the principal face. Groined vaults covered the side aisles. The tremendous height of the church staggers the visitor even in the poor fragment that alone remains today. The lofty dimensions of the Cluniac churches was the subject of acid comment from St. Bernard in the letter quoted on page 78. At La Charité-sur-Loire, another great Benedictine church, the splendid proportions of the building, mutilated though it is, present us with the best existing clue to the vanished glories of Cluny.

Vast as were the proportions of the church throughout, the culminating point of grandeur was reached in the choir leading to the apse with its five radiating chapels. Here stood the eight famous columns of cipolino marble, crowned with the splendid capitals whose fragments are preserved in the Museum. The vault in semi-dome of the apse was wholly covered by a fresco of God the Father holding the book of the Apocalypse, and surrounded by the familiar symbols of the Evangelists. The church must have been a blaze of colour no less than of carving. During the Middle Ages, as we have heard, many theologians regarded the whole creation as a living, visible symbol of God. It was at least a convenient theory for sculptors, even if St. Bernard, who knew his men, refused to accept it in its entirety. The appointments of the church were as splendid as its general design. We read in the abbey inventories of the incredible wealth of its treasure, of manuscripts, of vestments, of reliquaries, and shrines in gold and silver. Cluny was to the fore in relics as in everything else. Moses' rod, the stone from Sinai on which he knelt when receiving the Tables, the robes of the Virgin Mary, the alabaster box belonging to Mary Magdalene, the palm carried by the Saviour on the last entry into Jerusalem, and the cup of the Last Supper—such possessions were calculated to silence the pretensions of other monasteries.

A valuable relic necessarily demanded a valuable setting, and the wealth of the pious was the opportunity of the goldsmith.

It is a depressing experience to wander among the few remaining fragments of Cluny today and to reflect on the crime that led to the destruction of abbey and works of art alike. A large part of the treasure was looted and dispersed during the religious troubles of the sixteenth century. Grievous though was the loss, precious examples of Eastern textiles and goldsmiths' work still remained intact in the treasure of the church, and with the church its carvings. By the end of the eighteenth century the building had fallen into some disrepair, but nothing to speak of—a fact proved by the extraordinary difficulties that waited on its destruction. Then human devilry dealt blow after blow.

Of excesses due to religious or revolutionary ardour, it can at least be said that the men who commit them are for the time being mad. But at Cluny the crime lay in its deliberation and the ugly motive of commercial profit. Monasteries were abolished in 1790 by a decree of the Constituent Assembly. Cluny, in its protracted career of decadence, had fallen long before on evil days, and but thirty monks remained at the time of the Revolution. A revolutionary mob sacked the church in 1793 and followed up this effort by a delirious bonfire of vanities in the market-place, when pictures, wooden statues, papers, and books were all burnt. Women were active in the task of spoliation and quarrelled among themselves over gold and silver fabrics which were cut up for use as dress materials. Systematic destruction of the church was then taken in hand. It was sold for an old song and broken up into three lots. The purchasers, among them a renegade priest, were anxious to make a fortune out of "scrap," and turned the abbey into a gigantic quarry for building purposes. The bells were torn down and taken to Mâcon, where, in due course, they were turned into cannons for use by the revolutionary army. The ironwork, the choir stalls, the lead on the roof, all disappeared. Commercial destruction is even more sordid than destruction due to

fanaticism, and the vile orgy went on for years at Cluny. Towers, naves, side aisles were destroyed between 1809 and 1811. Tearing down the stonework was not easy, and in the end the church was blown up.

It is only fair to say that the inhabitants of Cluny made what efforts they could to save the church. At the outburst of the Revolution they had protected the abbey from an armed mob. Their responsibility for what took place was less grave than that of the Central Government. Edicts were issued from Paris about this or that portion of the abbey lands being sold and new buildings erected, without any regard to the destruction they involved. It chanced that the plan of a new road fell across the centre of the church. So it was driven through the nave. The petition of the inhabitants that the monastery should be preserved and used as a home for old soldiers was disregarded. A stud farm set up in precincts dedicated to the service of God was the only reply of the revolutionary despots. A large portion of the abbey was destroyed to make room for the stud farm. The inhabitants protested more than once, but the official machine, having begun to turn, rolled on with the stupidity and ruthlessness of its kind. Terrible accidents happened during the work of destruction, and, in spite of the tenets of the Age of Reason, were regarded by the superstitious as obvious marks of divine displeasure. When all at last was over, some sort of panic-stricken sense of the enormity committed appeared to dawn on the people of Cluny. There is a tale—not too well authenticated—told about Napoleon. He was passing through Burgundy on his way to receive the iron crown at Milan and had halted at Mâcon. A deputation waited on him there with a request that he should visit Cluny. The emperor flew into a rage. "Vous avez laissé vendre et détruire votre grande et bellé église," he replied; "allez, vous êtes des vandales; je ne visiterai pas Cluny." All this is very well, but Napoleon should have looked nearer home in his condemnation. Whether or not the town could have made more efforts to save the church, the motive force which led to its destruction came from Paris.

What remains of the abbot's palace—built during the

Indian summer of prosperity which befell Cluny in the fifteenth century when Jean de Bourbon was abbot—has now been turned into a museum. A few fragments of sculpture salved from the ruins of the church are housed there, notably fragments from the eight famous columns of the ambulatory and of three other columns more primitive in execution. These capitals, though grievously mutilated, are of superb quality and workmanship. Romanesque sculpture can show nothing finer or more imaginative than the eight Musical Tones, the four Cardinal Virtues, the Seasons, and the Rivers and Trees of Paradise.

The two capitals with the Biblical scenes are clearly of older date and ruder workmanship than those of the Seasons, the Virtues, and the Musical Tones. The Fall is graphically treated. Adam and Eve, two figures at once shamefaced and greedy, are stuffing apples hastily into their mouths, while the serpent twined round the tree pours evil counsels into their ears. The Almighty, a dignified figure dressed in the cloak of the period, is seen on the other face of the capital dealing faithfully with our guilty parents, who cower behind a fig tree.

The sacrifice of Abraham is perhaps the least interesting capital of the series. It is archaic in execution and can be equalled at Vézelay and elsewhere. But the capital of the four Rivers of Paradise is superb in conception and originality of design. The Cluny sculptures are remarkable for the beauty of the trees and foliage that seem to flower in the stone. An apple tree, a vine, a fig tree, and an olive tree represent the Garden of Eden and fill the four sides of the capital. Their leaves are entwined at the corners so as to form an arch of foliage under the abacus. At each angle a nude youth wearing a round cap like a toque holds a vial from which the rivers pour forth. Aquatic plants are watered by the streams, and the most realistic fish swim round the base of the capital. Unhappily two of the figures are almost obliterated, but enough is left to prove the beauty and originality of the design. Both at Autun and Toulouse we shall meet beautiful examples of the Rivers of Paradise, and the same theme

is repeated at Vézelay, but on a capital more roughly executed.

Only one capital has been saved of the series devoted to the Seasons and the Virtues. Large medallions on each face enclose the figures of four elegant women, symbolising Spring and Summer, Prudence, and a figure interpreted by some as Justice and by others as Grammar. The figures of Summer and Prudence are horribly mutilated, but Spring, a slim girl in the cloak and dress of the period, who clasps with both hands a square object—either a box or a book—is an exquisite young person. Summer had lost her arms, but the proportions of the figure are no less fine and elegant. She is draped in a classical robe and wears embroidered slippers. Abbé Terret compares her with a Tanagra statuette, but the Cluny sculptures are, I think, cast in a nobler mould. Prudence is represented as a warrior maiden in a coat of mail. Tall and slim like her sister Virtues, her general aspect is more severe. The face is emaciated, the expression fixed and grave. The remaining Virtue is often described as Justice, but the figure has the recognised attributes of Grammar. It throws an interesting sidelight on the training of the young. An encounter between Grammar and a young person of the time evidently was not a pleasant experience. Mediæval scholars took a serious view of education. Reading without tears was a principle unknown to the twelfth-century pedagogues. The mediæval child grew up with a wholesome fear of the rod ever before his eyes. Montessori and Froebel had not arisen to turn the path of learning into one of primrose dalliance. Education was looked upon as a stern discipline, and, as the Cluny capital proves, was administered on stern lines. Three centuries later Roger Ascham laments the hardships suffered by young wits at the hands of lewd schoolmasters, and pleaded for milder methods of instruction with the young. He specially and repeatedly begs the teacher not to beat the child. This the Grammar of Cluny is doing in no uncertain fashion. A vigorous-looking woman in a long robe has a flail in one hand, and with it administers a sound spanking to the child she holds (or held) in the other. Grammar has lost

her arm, and the entire figure of the child has been destroyed save one little bare foot, a pathetic relic, on the border of the medallion.

These figures are all remarkable for the beauty of their draperies and the skill with which the heavy folds follow the movements of the body. This is sculpture in the great manner, and proves close study and observation of nature. A broad band with an inscription in Latin frames each medallion. " Prudence tells us what we must do," says one. " Spring brings the first flowers and the first scents," says another. " The scythe cuts the ears of corn which the sun ripens," says a third. It would be absurd to seek any deep and symbolic meaning in these words. They state a plain fact in simple language and serve a decorative rather than a didactic purpose.

Music was one of the arts carried to great perfection at Cluny. Much time was devoted to musical instruction, and reference was made in the last chapter to the large number of psalms chanted in the course of the daily offices. Abbot Odilon when on a journey used to sing himself and make his fellow-monks do the same. St. Bernard, whom it is difficult to regard as other than an ecclesiastical kill-joy, had a special passage of denunciation for the musical services so much esteemed by the order. That the Cluny sculptors were concerned to represent musical images in the church was only natural. Two capitals saved from the wreckage of the choir represent the Eight Musical Tones. The four sides of the first capital are filled each by a musician holding an instrument, the figure being set in an oval frame with an inscribed border like the capital of the Virtues and the Seasons. Acanthus foliage, fruit, and flowers fill in the angles. These figures, some of men, some of women, are extraordinarily fine despite the mutilations they have suffered. The First Tone is represented by a young man sitting on a stool and playing a stringed instrument. There is nothing ecclesiastical about this plump and healthy-looking youth conventionally dressed, who faces us with an air so frank and direct. The inscription on the border of the medallion states that " This First Tone begins the series of musical modes." The Second

CLUNY : CAPITAL OF THIRD MUSICAL TONE.

[*Photo. Edit. Giraudon.*

CLUNY : CAPITAL OF SEASONS (SPRING).

Tone is shown as a dancer, a beautiful figure instinct with grace, who balances herself with one hand while she holds a cymbal in the other. Half the head, unfortunately, has been destroyed, but enough remains to show a mobile and expressive countenance. Round the border run the words: "According to the law of numbers the Second Tone follows the First." The Third Tone is one of the best preserved of the series. A bearded man sits on a high seat decorated with arcades and plays on a six-stringed cithara. The musician wears the dress and shoes of the period and bends over his instrument with a serious and attentive air. The inscription reminds us that the Third Tone recalls the Resurrection of the Saviour. The Fourth Tone is badly mutilated. Nothing is left but the torso, from which the legs have disappeared. It shows a man carrying over his back, like a yoke, a rod decorated with bells. The same theme appears on a capital at Autun. This curious instrument, known as the cymbalum, was used for funerals and served the same function as the passing bell. Hence the inscription on the border to the effect that chants of the Fourth Tone remind us of sorrow.

The second capital of the Four Last Tones is arranged on different lines from the first. The figures still appear in oval frames with a background of palms and foliage, but a broad band runs round the centre of the capital, and the musicians are seated at it as at a table. The ovals only show on the upper half of the capital, an arrangement less effective on the whole than that of the large medallions described above. This capital of the Four Last Tones has suffered more than any other in the Museum. Of the Fifth Tone nothing is left but the legs: head, bust, and instrument have all disappeared. The Sixth Tone has lost his head, but the seated figure remains playing a box-like instrument. The Seventh Tone, a profile figure, has lost his head and most of his body. There are traces of a mutilated instrument, possibly a trumpet. As for the Eighth Tone, head, bust, and instrument have all disappeared, and the legs alone remain. The inscriptions on the borders are as simple and direct as those previously noted. The Fifth Tone proclaims: "How far cast down

is he who exalts himself!" The Sixth: "If you desire pious affections look at the Sixth Tone." The Seventh: "The Seventh Tone fills us with the Holy Spirit and its gifts." The Eighth: "The Eighth Tone shows us the bliss of the saints."

A good deal of obscurity arises over the iconography of the next capital. Is it a continuation of the series devoted to the Seasons and Virtues, or does it represent a new set of symbolic figures? Again we have a series of slight and elegant women framed in medallions. The first holds a coffer, the second a sceptre, the third bends forward with hands together. The fourth figure has disappeared altogether. Many suggestions have been made as to the meaning of these figures. Abbé Terret * is of opinion that they symbolise the Mechanical Arts. But personally I feel considerable doubt as to whether any of these distinguished ladies really represent ironmongery and cabinet work. The interpretation after all is a secondary matter. What concerns us primarily is the beauty and grace of the figures and the serene and joyous spirit they breathe. Two further capitals, both severely mutilated, represent, it is thought, the Labours of the Months. Flowers and foliage cover the whole body of the capital, and the figures were grouped against this background. One man with a triangular-shaped basket resembles a similar figure at Vézelay. Two foliage capitals complete the series.

Quite apart from the superb quality of the Cluny capitals as works of art, the extreme significance of their iconography must not be overlooked. These shattered fragments are still the most eloquent of all witnesses to the humanist spirit of Cluny and all that it has meant to the mind of the civilised world. Their subject-matter is unique. In what other church do we find columns in the sanctuary devoted to Seasons and Virtues and Musical Tones? These serene and gracious figures are far removed from the demons and devouring beasts who appal us in many churches of the period. Hell and damnation, themes so common elsewhere, appear to have been quietly ignored. Cluny was the premier abbey of Europe, famous and

* "La Sculpture Bourguignonne," p. 152.

renowned above all others. Yet in the most sacred part of the church her abbots were ready to approve the erection of capitals which cannot in any real sense be called ecclesiastical. And this in an age obsessed by ghostly fears and terror born of ignorance as to the why and wherefore of the simplest natural phenomena. Whatever the condition of the rank and file, the best minds at Cluny clearly had emancipated themselves from the sombre mentality of the Middle Ages, and called men to the worship of God in the spirit of the Benedicite, not the spirit of fear. But the general consciousness of the world develops very slowly, and centuries were to pass before truths, seen clearly enough by the few, could become matters of practical application for the many.

These capitals, as we shall see in Chapter XII., raise questions of great importance in the history of sculpture. Was the School of Cluny an indigenous school, and how did it act and react on the *ateliers* in other parts of France? Though Cluny exercised centralised control in ecclesiastical affairs, no effort, as we saw, was made to impose a style in the abbeys founded by the order in other parts of France. Local resources and local talent were used on the spot wherever found and without any effort to stereotype a given plan or given decoration. It was the spirit, not the style of Cluny that counted in the days of its power. The various *ateliers* at work in different parts of France were not water-tight units. Men travelled from the one to the other, taking with them their ideas and even their peculiarities. Many learned theories are based upon those peculiarities; some of them must, I think, be received with caution. The comparative method has its perils, for sculpture may look archaic when it is only clumsy, and other carvings are precocious, not late in date. Personally, I think that theories built upon an apostle's leg being crossed from right to left in one place and left to right in another; or deductions drawn from St. Matthew winking his right eye in Languedoc, while St. Luke screws up his left lid in Burgundy, can be pushed from sense into real foolishness. A gleaner like myself in the field of other men's studies can only record with a point of malice how experts quarrel

among themselves over such deductions. But naturally a comparative study of technique is very important in the effort to solve questions about which no written word remains, and not only in Burgundy (where we should expect the example of Cluny to be copied), but so far away as Toulouse and Moissac there are plastic similarities in the figures and in the treatment of draperies that open up many vistas of speculation. Moissac, as we shall see, was reformed about the middle of the eleventh century by the monk Durand, sent for that purpose from Cluny, by the great Abbot St. Hugh. The relations between the two abbeys were intimate, and we may rest assured that questions of church building and sculpture were kept under review as closely as theological matters.

The fragments of the Seasons and Virtues at Cluny prove how far reaching was the humanist movement promoted by the great abbots. It is a happy paradox in ecclesiastical history that the first breach with the oppressive principles of the early Middle Ages should have been made within the Church itself and by rulers set in high places of the Church. The Seasons and the Virtues are not out to frighten ignorant men and women with devil talk. They herald the coming of new or, more correctly, a return to older and saner standards and ideals. We know little about the brave spirits who in former days adventured gallantly along dangerous paths—children of a more spacious age, we seldom give a thought to their struggles and difficulties. But, ruined and deserted though Cluny is today, let us remember that here eight hundred years ago beat a pulse of noble life to which all Europe vibrated. The broken capitals in the little Museum, tragic though their mutilation, give us some measure of that life, and turn our thoughts in gratitude to the men who relit the lamps of beauty and truth.

CHAPTER VIII

VÉZELAY

No page of mediæval history is more puzzling than the artless narratives that reveal the shabby work that went on over relics. Holy and devout men, famed for their sanctity, were capable apparently of stooping to the lowest depths of theft and fraud when the acquisition of a saint's body or even part of a saint's limb was in question. These surprising tales about relics give us pause as to the real mental attitude of the age. Were the monks in fact so pious and so superstitious as we think? Is there not evidence of a spirit of scepticism alive in the cloister combined with a shrewd eye to the main chance? The question is inevitable, for if priests and monks really believed in the wonder-working marvels attributed to holy remains, what man among them would have dared to lay a finger on the resting-place of a martyr or disturb his bones? And, again, when relics had either been stolen, or some story deliberately faked as to their existence in a given church, what value could the authors, either of the theft or of the fiction, attribute to the miracles before which the faithful prostrated themselves?

But, apart from spiritual values, the possession of relics was a matter of great practical importance to a church. Relics—really high-class relics—meant not only prestige but an abounding source of revenue to any abbey lucky enough to possess them. A flow of pilgrims full of penitence and alms meant wealth and fame to a community. It was a practical question of business and revenue. Fancy conjures up the scene of some capable monk who filled the office of treasurer drawing the attention of the abbot to an unsatisfactory balance sheet, and impressing on that harassed ecclesiastic the urgent need for relics and the provision of an attractive centre for pilgrims, if the com-

munity was to keep its head above waters. Stories so advantageous could not have arisen by accident. Who set about the tale that the body of St. James was in the keeping of the monks of Compostela? How did the relics of St. Lazarus appear so opportunely at Autun? We may rest assured that the monastic augurs winked when the fashion in pilgrimages set to a given place and the abbey church was enlarged and beautified to accommodate the crowds whose offerings led to overflowing coffers.

But some people went a good deal further than the manufacture of tales pleasing to the faithful. What are we to think of Aigulf, that enterprising monk from Fleury, who dug up the bones of St. Benedict himself and brought his prize in triumph from Monte Cassino to what is now the splendid church of St. Benoît-sur-Loire? Who stole the bones of Ste. Foy from Agen and brought them to Conques? And Vézelay, the subject of this chapter—the monks themselves betrayed a certain amount of embarrassment as to how to account for the relics of Mary Magdalene being in their possession. The journey of Lazarus and his sisters to Southern France had become an accepted legend in Burgundy. Even so it was a little awkward to admit that one of the community on his travels in Provence had stolen the saint's body from the crypt of St. Maximin. One version of the story made out that the sacred relics at St. Maximin were in danger from Saracen pirates, and that the monks of Vézelay were taking care of them—just as Queen Elizabeth pleaded she was "taking care" of one of Philip of Spain's treasure ships blown in by stress of weather into Plymouth Sound. The populace was ignorant and credulous. No doubt it was easy to impose any tale, however preposterous, on them. It may even seem a little thankless for a modern writer to cavil at an element of fraud that entered into the building of some of the most magnificent churches preserved to us. But the way men think is a vital thing in history, and a line of conduct at variance with the prevailing tendencies of the age is always of special interest. During the twelfth century our attention is often arrested by a very odd current of scepticism underlying the religious outlook

of the time. The incidents concerned with relics show that even among the monks who controlled monasteries, there were realists untouched by the credulity they exploited, and whose eye for big business was as keen as that of any latter-day captain of industry.

The Madeleine at Vézelay, dubious though the legend to which it owes its fame, is the largest and most magnificent Romanesque church extant. Cluny was still finer and grander, but of Cluny only a fragment remains. The vastness and splendour of the church make an overwhelming impression on the visitor. The site, too, is very striking. Vézelay is built on a hill rising out of a plain and commands a wide view over the rolling Burgundian landscape. The beautiful church of St. Père-sous-Vézelay, a fine example of early Burgundian Gothic, lies at the foot of the hill as though guarding the approach to the precincts above. What is left of secular Vézelay is a poor little place. A collection of houses—the word town seems a misuse of language—falls away from the dominant walls of the abbey as though they shrank from contact with a building so imperious. Round the steep slopes of the hill winds a road of many turnings, along which long ago pilgrims in procession took their way chanting and praying as they walked.

Today the voice of praise and worship is silent. The Madeleine has become a national monument, structurally safe, spiritually stripped bare, and the remains of the secular buildings lie as though exhausted by the violent and turbulent history of the past. For at no stage in its long history has peace reigned at Vézelay. Towards the middle of the ninth century Gérard de Roussillon, the hero of a famous *chanson de geste*, founded a convent for women at Vézelay. This was destroyed by Norman pirates, and when the monastery was rebuilt it was occupied by monks instead of nuns. For years after its foundation Vézelay was a modest monastic establishment no more remarkable than scores of others. Then, during the eleventh century, the rumour went abroad that the relics of Mary Magdalene were preserved there. Never did a tale reap a harvest more amazing and more prodigious. The remote Bur-

gundian hill leapt into fame comparable with Rome or Compostela, or even the Holy Places at Jerusalem itself. The trader followed in the wake of the pilgrim, and the fairs established at Vézelay were among the most noted in Europe. Wealth and affluence accrued to the monastery already handsomely endowed by Gérard de Roussillon. So much wealth and so much fame seem to have intoxicated the abbots. Not only did they quarrel with their spiritual and temporal overlords, the abbots of Cluny and the counts of Nevers, but they lacked the wisdom to conciliate their own neighbours. Relations between the church and townfolk were of the worst. Matters reached such a pitch in 1106 that, undeterred by ecclesiastical anathemas, the citizens of Vézelay rose in their wrath and slew the Abbot Artaud. In 1152 there was a second rising when the abbey was pillaged, and the Abbot Pons, a brother of Peter the Venerable, had to fly for his life. The struggle between monastic authority and the growing power of the communes took the form of many conflicts on a far-flung front during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and at no place did the battle rage more hotly than at Vézelay. In the end no doubt the commune would have triumphed over the cloister there as elsewhere, but unexpected allies were raised up to the citizens during the struggle. Thanks to an event that took place during the thirteenth century, the star of Vézelay waned as suddenly as it had blazed forth.

It is easy to imagine with what jealousy and rage successive generations of monks at St. Maximin must have watched the fame and glory of Vézelay—built up on the relics filched from their own community. A day came when some Provençal monk, more shrewd than his fellows, conceived the bright idea of making up a fresh story calculated to curb so much wealth and so much arrogance. It was all a mistake, so the new tale ran, that the relics of the Madeleine were at Vézelay. The true body of the saint had just been discovered at St. Maximin, and whatever bones were enshrined on the Burgundian hill they were not those of the great penitent. The rumour went round like wildfire and spread excitement and confusion in religious

circles. The blow to Vézelay proved mortal. Pilgrims, who, like other people before and since, probably liked a change, rapidly deserted a church which harboured supposititious bones alone and flocked to Provence instead. St. Maximin, after centuries of obscurity and neglect, became as popular as Vézelay was now discredited. The Provençal monks had not only the pleasure of witnessing the downfall of a hated rival, but the further and most practical satisfaction of bulging coffers at its expense. Thus poetic justice overtook the original theft. The great days of Vézelay were over, though for some centuries it dragged out a listless monastic existence till its final extinction at the time of the Revolution.

Not a very attractive story, yet broken by one dramatic incident that links Vézelay with world events and personalities. A cross on the northern slopes marks the spot where St. Bernard, in the presence of King Louis of France and his court, preached the Second Crusade in 1147. Under its shadow we may recall events far removed from the mean and empty streets of Vézelay as they are today. Here were gathered on this memorable occasion some of the great figures who moulded twelfth-century life and thought. No critic of St. Bernard's intellectual outlook can fail to recognise the essential power and nobility of the man. Faith burned in him like a flame, sometimes a devouring flame, but never a flame fed by base or unworthy desires. The Crusade he preached proved a calamitous adventure for France, but the passion of his words, for the time being at least, swept cooler men and women off their feet. They are worth a glance, those personages in the royal circle on the hill at Vézelay, surrounded by eager crowds straining forward to hear the preacher, for more than one of them was fated to make history.

To the appeal of St. Bernard, Louis VII., more monk than king, must have lent a willing ear. But the imperious girl at his side, destined in the future to wear the crown of England as she then wore the crown of France, and to play a leading part in the turbulent policies of two kingdoms—what moved Eleanor of Aquitaine on that memorable day to take the cross? Did St. Bernard stir some element of

true emotion in that stormy nature, or was the Crusade and the excitement it involved just a way of escape from a dull court and the piety of a despised husband? And yet another figure commands our attention in that crowd —Abbot Suger of St. Denis—the great humanist who stands at the headwaters of the revival in architecture and letters, and has left the stamp of his genius on the Gothic cathedrals of the thirteenth century. From his monk's cell in St. Denis came the inspiration of new artistic forms that spread throughout Europe. Suger's mind moved in values of artistic excellence to which the revival of learning in Europe owes a debt greater than it realises. As he has told us in his own words, it is only through symbols of beauty that our poor spirits can raise themselves from things temporal to things eternal. Beauty flowered again under his hand. To Suger, a devout Churchman, but no less a wise and sagacious man of affairs, the eloquence of St. Bernard as it caught and swept the crowd at Vézelay must have been an unwelcome experience. He was the reluctant witness of the launching of an enterprise he had discouraged. The First Crusade had drained the resources of the State and led to appalling loss of life. The King of France had no easy place to fill, and kings had their hands full at home without embarking on foreign adventures that took them away from their own realms for months and even years. As a loyal son of the Church, Suger might echo St. Bernard's appeal for the defence of the Holy Sepulchre. As a loyal subject of the king concerned with setting finances and government in order, the loss in blood and treasure inseparable from the Crusade filled him with foreboding—a foreboding that events were more to justify.

And what did Suger think of the Madeleine, then in its pristine magnificence? Did he turn from cares of State to spend some happier hours with the architects and sculptors of the abbey? History preserves punctiliously its dreary record of battles and violence, but how precious it would be to us to know whether or not monks from his *atelier* at St. Denis worked at Vézelay, and if the great tympanum sculptures of the narthex and the historiated capitals of the nave met with his approval!

We know little or nothing about the builders of Vézelay. Architects and sculptors have vanished without leaving a trace of their existence or names. We know that Abbot Artaud, who perished at the hands of the citizens of Vézelay, built a church that was consecrated in 1104 and destroyed by fire in 1120. The extent of the fire is not known, and how far the reconstruction followed the main lines of the old. The damage was made good in a very short time, for the present church was consecrated by Innocent II. in 1132. Consecration of course did not imply that the whole building was finished, and many of the historiated capitals in the nave were clearly worked on at a later date. The hosts of pilgrims who flocked to Vézelay in the days of its fame led not only to the enlargements of the church, but their offerings explain the magnificent scale of the work. A very curious and interesting memorial of the great fire is preserved in the narthex at Vézelay. It consists of a keystone carved with the seated figure of a woman holding the model of a church in one hand and a banner in the other. Round the edge runs a Latin inscription to the effect: "I have been burnt, but soon shall be most beautiful." Unfortunately we have no clue to the puissant spirit who refashioned the church in such majestic style.

The outside of the building need not detain us. The Romanesque façade was designed to carry towers to north and south, only one of which was built. The original design was left half finished in the thirteenth century, when a Gothic gable with lancet windows was added to give more light to the narthex. Viollet Le Duc's restoration in 1843 finally obliterated whatever traces of twelfth-century sculpture had survived on the façade of the Madeleine. The ancient tympana have vanished from the three portals that formed the main entrance, and Viollet Le Duc's reconstruction of the central Christ in Glory is an unhappy effort about which the least said the better.

Four angels of destruction have poured their vials of wrath over the churches of France—the wars of religion, the eighteenth-century canons, the Revolution, and the restoring architects of the nineteenth century. France, no less than Germany, went through an orgy of restoration

during the dreary years known to us as mid-Victorian. Terrible things were done with old buildings in the name of restoration. We shall find unhappy traces of these activities in many parts of France. Abadie of Périgord, Mimey and Malley of Auvergne, are, I hope, wandering in a very hot corner of the Inferno set aside for bad architects. I should hesitate to place Viollet Le Duc in the same category. He was a distinguished man who rendered many services to architecture, though at times he succumbed, like his fellow-sinners, to the temptation of trying to improve on an old building. But, if he escapes Inferno, he will have a hard struggle to get into Heaven.

Structurally, Viollet Le Duc showed great skill when dealing with the Madeleine, then in a perilous state of decay; but, like many men of his generation, he came to grief through trying to treat with twelfth-century sculptors on even terms. Let us pass, therefore, within these outer doors, and then the splendours of Vézelay will be made manifest to our eyes.

The Madeleine, like other pilgrimage churches, was preceded by a large narthex more than 22 metres long. This narthex is in itself a church of quite substantial size, and consists of a central nave with three bays and side aisles. It is a masterly example of early ogival vaulting, and, as always in the transition from Romanesque to Gothic, elements of both styles appear side by side. The pointed arches of the narthex nave are carried on four robust clustered pillars with engaged columns. Every capital is historiated and richly carved. Above runs a triforium gallery, opening into the nave by a series of miniature arcades. These consist of rounded arches resting on small columns, each little column crowned by a carved capital. This upper gallery is a spacious place, and the Musée Lapidaire of the abbey is now housed in it. No visitor should miss seeing the priceless fragments of sculpture it contains.

Three great portals open from the narthex into the nave of the church. It is difficult to speak of them without some apparent exaggeration of language. Needless to say, Vézelay has no solitary claim to the Keys of Heaven.

[*Photo. Edit. Giraudon.*

VÉZELAY : TYMPANUM.

[P. 132

The tympana of Autun and Moissac, the noble fragments of sculpture at Cluny and Toulouse—all these are comparable in artistic quality with the central portal of the Madeleine. But the sculptures at Vézelay, despite certain mutilations, have preserved to a degree unknown in any other Romanesque church the wealth and magnificence of their original setting. They are not splendid fragments, but still form part of a splendid whole. Hence the astonishing impression they make.

Of the three portals the one in the centre is not only the largest but incomparably the grandest. The archivolts of the tympanum rest on clustered columns with fluted shafts. Figures of Apostles or saints appear on pilasters inserted between the richly carved capitals and the spring of the arch. The centre of the tympanum rests on a magnificent pier with a fluted shaft and foliated capital. This broadens into a remarkable group of sculpture—in front a great figure of John the Baptist holding a disc once carved with the Paschal Lamb; while to right and left Apostles are engaged, like many other figures throughout this great composition, in earnest converse. Monsieur Michel writes of this group on the central pier at Vézelay with great enthusiasm: "On ne saurait trouver dans l'art du XII. siècle rien de plus beau que le geste d'insistance et d'autorité que Pierre addresse à Marc ardemment attentif. C'est ici le morceau le plus remarquable de cette série de figures engagés en graves dialogues, qui des coffrets d'ivoire passèrent dans la statuaire, et dans le chœur de Bamberg et celui de Saint-Michel d'Hildesheim conservent en Allemagne des exemples postérieurs."*

A remarkable feature of this great decorative whole is the skill and the daring with which certain figures transcend the limits of the space assigned to them. The nimbus of the Baptist rises high above the column he crowns into the base of the tympanum, thus dividing the lintel in two. A huge figure of Christ elongated in true Burgundian style fills, and indeed overflows, the centre of the tympanum. From the fingers of the hands outstretched in blessing fall rays of fire that strike the Apostles who are grouped, some

* Michel, "Histoire de l'Art," vol. i., p. 640.

standing, others sitting, about the Lord. Each Apostle except St. Peter—easily known by his keys—holds a book open or closed. Every line of the figures is expressive of deep feeling. The river of the water of life and the tree of life of which St. John writes in the last chapter of the Apocalypse appear on either side of the Saviour's head. The river flows from the nimbus to the left, the tree blossoms to the right. Archaic this great figure of Christ may be; out of all proportion, some may urge. The sculptor admittedly has not acquired entire control of his medium, and the laws of perspective are often at fault. But the whole composition in its nobility and strength comes to us with a breath as from the childhood of the world. The iconoclasts of the Revolution inflicted considerable damage on the heads, but the figures remain to interpret the emotion of the agitated group, filled by a sense of new and marvellous life.

Tumultuous draperies and elongated figures are characteristic of Burgundian sculpture. We shall find them again at Autun. But if the Vézelay tympanum, thanks to its happier theme, lacks the grim details of the Last Judgment at Autun, it abounds in enigmatic and puzzling features. The majestic composition that fills the half circle of the tympanum is surrounded by eight small compartments, each holding a group of figures. Some of these little scenes are charming in their grace and dignity—especially the attractive group to the left of the husband and wife talking earnestly together, and an adjoining figure of the man with a thorn in his foot. But it is more difficult to explain the men pointing to their bare legs, the two men with dogs' heads, and the strangely shod group in another compartment. No less puzzling is the long string of people who decorate the lintel. To the left we see what looks like a sacrificial procession. First come a group of archers, then personages carrying bread, fish, a seal, a vase; then armed men leading an ox which they present to a priest holding a long spear. On the right are the strangest-looking creatures with huge ears, then a wholly comic dwarf trying to mount a spirited horse by means of a small ladder, then a knight on horseback, and other figures.

Each procession moves from the side to the centre of the tympanum, where two elongated saints dominate the scene. Tradition has associated the names of St. Peter and the Magdalene with these figures. In size they far outstrip the dimensions of the lintel, their heads rising into the tympanum itself. There can be no question about St. Peter armed with the inevitable keys, but the second figure, mutilated though it is, has bare feet—the attribute of an Apostle—and is probably St. Paul, not the Magdalene. For Peter and Paul were the primitive patrons of the church. Throughout the lintel the note of wonder and emotion is as striking as among the Apostles who form the central scene. Two archivolts frame the tympanum and the eight compartments already described. The outer one is carved with *rosaces*, the inner with a delightful series of little figures representing the Signs of the Zodiac and the Labours of the Months. Since there are twenty-nine, not twenty-four, keystones in the arch, the sculptor was driven—as we shall see later on the sculptors in the west of France were often driven—to filling up the gaps as his fancy dictated. It is pleasant to turn from the dread scenes common in Romanesque sculpture to these homely yet charming thoughts of springtime and harvest. For whatever the vagaries and cruelties of man, springtime and harvest never fail, and the Benedicite of nature goes on from age to age though the voice of human praise be lost in discord.

How are we to read the sculpture of the central portal at Vézelay? What does it all mean? Critics have differed as to the interpretation of this great composition. Some have seen in it a reference to St. Bernard's Crusade —obviously impossible, since the tympanum is older than 1147. Others connect it with St. John's message to the Seven Churches of Asia; others, again, suggest that it symbolises the life of the Church. Monsieur de Lasteyrie, Monsieur Michel, Monsieur Mâle, and Abbé Terret, all agree that the central scene represents the Pentecost, though the symbol of the dove never appears. But the figures on the lintel and in the eight compartments offer problems more difficult to solve. Monsieur Mâle has

worked out with great skill a theory that brings these strange groups into a coherent relationship with the central design. It is generally recognised that sculpture in the early days of its revival was a rendering in stone of scenes inspired by illuminated manuscripts, ivory caskets, silk textiles, and other treasure guarded in the monasteries. Archæologists have had few tasks more interesting than the discovery of these primitive models turned by the mediæval sculptors to such noble use.

Monsieur Mâle* has been able to lay his hand on a twelfth-century Lectionary in the Bibliothèque Nationale which was once the property of Cluny. This Lectionary is illuminated with scenes of the Pentecost, among which Christ appears exactly as at Vézelay—a figure with arms outstretched, from whose fingers rays of fire fall on the heads of the Apostles. According to this theory, the excited and vivacious people grouped round the tympanum are the various races of the world, who hear for the first time the Pentecostal message. It was an old tradition of the Church to associate the Pagan nations with the redemptive gifts of Whitsuntide. In the church of the Holy Apostles at Constantinople a mosaic dating from the time of Justinian showed the twelve Apostles each preaching to a different race. The same idea appears in an eleventh-century illuminated manuscript of St. Gregory of Nazianzus in the Bibliothèque Nationale and in a Greek Psalm Book (also of the eleventh century), the property of the British Museum. The illuminations in the British Museum manuscript show a series of seated Apostles, each preaching to a group of men with varying dresses, hats, and shoes. Two of them are shod in the same curious fashion as the three men we have already noted. It is possible, therefore, that at Vézelay the figures on the lintel and in the eight compartments carry out this idea of the Pentecostal spirit falling on the varied races of the world. The subject would have obvious suitability in a pilgrimage church, though we cannot hope at this date to explain all the scenes of this remarkable whole. Some of them no doubt refer to miracles and legends the stories of which

* "L'Art Religieux du 12ème Siècle," p. 327.

have been lost. The two men with dogs' heads—images of the Cynocephali—are perhaps poor degenerate people who are called upon, nevertheless, to enter into the grace and joy of the Gospel. The strange figures with huge ears represent the fabulous Scythian people. The note of the weird and the fantastic is emphasised throughout to show that, however diverse the semi-savage races of the world, Jesus has come to proclaim salvation to all men. Monsieur Mâle's explanation is persuasive and ingenious, and though it cannot be regarded as wholly satisfactory, other theories are open to still more serious criticism. Abbé Terret is preparing a volume on Vézelay which will complete the invaluable works he has already published on Cluny and Autun. We must possess our souls in patience till the lamp of his knowledge illuminates many obscure places in the sculptures of the Madeleine.

One other point must be stressed. I refer frequently in this book to the debt owed by mediæval sculptors to illuminated manuscripts, to ivories, to classical remains, to ideas taken from here or there. But from whatever source the ideas may come, the life and quality of the work is due to the genius of the sculptor alone. No mistake could be worse than to regard the twelfth-century sculptors as copyists instead of great and creative artists. This is no hieratic art rooted in formulas and slavishly imitating a conventional type. The great artists of the twelfth century were not content merely to translate into stone models drawn from traditional sources. The men and women of the day were present before their eyes, and scenes on the tympanum at Vézelay, and in a more marked degree certain capitals in the nave, bear every sign of study from life.

The portals to north and south of the central door at Vézelay, though they complete and sustain the wonderful impression of the whole, are necessarily smaller in dimensions. The space in the tympana is restricted, and though the figures are gracious and dignified, they lack the quality of the Apostles. In so vast a church many craftsmen must have been employed, and the side portals betray another authorship than that of the great Pentecostal

scene. The note of wonder and surprise that runs like an undercurrent at Vézelay is faithfully reproduced throughout.

The sculptor has devoted the tympanum of the southern door to the story of the Virgin. On the lintel are charming scenes of the Annunciation, Visitation, and the Nativity. The visit of the Shepherds is crowded into an astonishingly small space. Small though the scale is, the unknown sculptor of the group has reproduced the essential features of the Syrian formula of the Nativity—the Virgin in bed with the Holy Babe at her side, a midwife, and a pensive St. Joseph, hand on cheek. Above a regal-looking Virgin receives the adoration of the Magi.

Three scenes from the walk to Emmaus are sculptured on the lintel of the north door. Above Christ ascends to Heaven amid gestures of grief and wonder from the assembled Apostles.

Two admirable archivolts surround the tympana of these lateral doors. There is nothing in the Madeleine finer and more vigorous in execution than the splendid *rosaces* that decorate the inner arch and the foliage scroll that twines round the outer one. Historiated capitals crown the pilasters, one plain, one fluted, on which the tympana rests. Two angels, one with outstretched arms, one with a banner and an oliphant, are almost dancing off the stones.

Vézelay is rich in surprises. The pretentious appearance of the restored outer façade gives little hint of the noble ensemble of the narthex. But fine though is the narthex, it is only an introduction to further splendours. Few people will ever forget their impressions when passing for the first time through the triple portal into the main body of the Madeleine. Many Romanesque churches are sombre and ill lighted. On a dull day it is often very difficult to get an adequate view of the sculptures they contain. In the dawn of church building, before the technique of the vault had been mastered, architects necessarily hesitated about weakening the walls with windows. Openings were pierced with a timid hand. Not so Vézelay. The nave is not only vast and spacious, but it is astonishingly well

[*Photo. Edit. Giraudon.*

VÉZELAY : VIEW OF NAVE.

[P. 138

lighted. The architect must have been an audacious fellow. He flung groined vaults over nave and side aisles alike with airy nonchalance, strengthened the vaults with massive transverse arches, and broke up his walls with windows both in the side aisles and clerestory. Consequently the sunshine pours in at will. Buttresses had to be added subsequently to strengthen the walls, for liberties with windows were indulged in only at a price before Gothic had solved all the technical problems concerned with building.

The nave of the Madeleine is 62 metres long and consists of ten bays resting on cruciform piers with four engaged columns. These are crowned with the series of historiated capitals for which Vézelay is famed. The stone used has a tint of pink, and when the sun shines a rosy glow flushes the whole nave. The massive transverse arches and the inner arches of the bays are inlaid with black and white stone, a decoration very unusual in Burgundy though common in Auvergne. A beautiful ribbon decoration with *rosaces* runs over every arch and forms a sculptured band dividing the wall of the nave in two. The architect was as much concerned to beautify the church above as below. A window is pierced in the clerestory above each bay, and the pilasters and capitals that carry the transverse arches are covered with a wealth of carving equal in quality to that of the historiated capitals below. Vast and imposing though is the impression made by vault, arch, and column, the sense of sobriety which is the hallmark of great art is no less present. "Nous pourrons dire," writes Monsieur Cherest,* "que le roman de la Madeleine est en quelque sorte l'ordre dorique du Christianisme, mais non le dorique épais des temples de Pestum. Ce serait plutôt, toutes proportions gardées, la sobre et fine élégance du dorique employé par Ictinus et ses émules du plus beau temps du siècle Périclès."

The pillars of the narthex are in line with those of the nave, and on great occasions the doors could be flung open and the whole space of the building made available. The wealth of the Madeleine and the numbers of pilgrims

* "Annuaire de l'Yonne," 1866.

it had to accommodate are forcibly borne in upon us by the great proportions of the church. The early Gothic choir added in the thirteenth century is a very perfect example of its kind, and proves that right up to the date of the counterblast by the monks of St. Maximin, Vézelay had to keep on enlarging its dimensions to meet the claims made on it.

Viollet Le Duc, when restoring the church, subjected the interior to a ruthless scraping and cleaning up; capitals were made good with a heavy hand. But we should in fairness remember the state of extreme dilapidation that had overtaken the Madeleine, and we owe it to him that the splendid whole we see today has been restored to something of its pristine glory.

The capitals of the nave raise various questions of date and construction to which archæologists cannot give a clear reply. Is the present nave the work of Abbot Artaud, begun in 1096 and remodelled after the fire in 1120? Or, as Monsieur de Lasteyrie suggests, was it completely rebuilt after that catastrophe, obviously no trifling affair, since over 1,100 people lost their lives in it? It is difficult to believe that historiated capitals of such quality could be the product of the first decade of the twelfth century, and an archaic capital of Adam and Eve (ninth pillar north), presumably saved from the wreckage of the fire, may belong to the church built in Abbot Artaud's time. The narthex, as we know, was dedicated by Innocent II. in 1132, but judging from interior evidence—the only evidence available—it is doubtful whether the capitals of the nave as we see them today were all finished when the consecration took place. The date of building or dedication is not always a sure guide to the sculpture a church may contain. Capitals were often worked on after they were in position—a habit confounding to chronology.*

The great ensemble at Vézelay has obvious kinship with the capitals of the nave at Autun. Be it noted too that,

* In another thousand years' time archæologists may ask identical questions about Liverpool Cathedral, and argue among themselves as to what portions of the building were finished when the consecration took place in 1925.

like Vézelay, the cathedral at Autun was consecrated by Innocent II. in 1132, during his visit to Burgundy. 1132 must have been the *annus mirabilis* of Burgundian architecture, for Cluny was consecrated the same year, and undoubtedly building operations were hurried forward in each place to win for the three great churches the special prestige of papal consecration. But though consecrated at the same time, this fact still leaves room for considerable variation in the date of the work.

It is useless to hazard conjectures when facts are so scanty, but Autun and Vézelay are not far distant one from another, and work at the two churches must have gone on at the same time. Sculptors may have been employed, sometimes by the one *atelier*, sometimes by the other. Vézelay must have drained the artistic resources of the province in view of the astonishing rapidity with which the church was built and rebuilt. Though consecration dates from the same year, I risk the opinion that the nave at Vézelay is slightly earlier, and is less mature in workmanship than Autun. In the twelfth century matters artistic were moving so rapidly that even ten years make a perceptible difference in the degree of technique acquired. Both churches drew on a common iconography. There is the same bewildering confusion of subjects taken with apparent irrelevance from both the Old and the New Testaments, from legends of the saints, and from other moral allegories. Demons and fantastic monsters assaulting guilty and innocent alike, the dreadful image of a serpent devouring a woman's breasts, the Rivers of Paradise, David and Goliath, the Golden Calf, the Death of Cain, the Story of Lazarus, the Struggle of Jacob with the Angel, the Legend of St. Hubert—these subjects appear both at Vézelay and Autun. At Vézelay homely and delightful scenes of country life are introduced that point to careful study from nature. But nothing at Vézelay touches the level of the superb Eve at Autun, described in another chapter, and individual capitals at St. Lazare are more beautiful because technically more perfect than what we see at the Madeleine.

At Vézelay as at Autun many capitals baffle interpre-

tation. The denunciations of St. Bernard about the monstrosities and ineptitudes that disfigured the House of God echo with special force among the splendours of the Madeleine; for the nave holds a fine menagerie of monstrous beasts. The famous letter to the Abbot of St. Thierry was written nearly fourteen years before the Second Crusade was preached at Vézelay. If Suger's artistic soul rejoiced in the beauties of the abbey church, with how different an eye must the austere Abbot of Clairvaux have regarded such a diversion of money and effort from the true service of God!

A detailed story of the historiated capitals at Vézelay would fill a book, so numerous are the groups which crown the pillars of both nave and narthex. They vary, as any great ensemble must vary, in degrees of execution and interest. Symbolists undaunted by difficulties offer ingenious explanations of the subject-matter and its plan, but to the ordinary student the general scheme seems haphazard when not obscure. The narthex was often viewed as a place of penitence, beyond which sinners were not allowed to pass till they had made their peace with God. The story of David and Bathsheba (second pillar north) is appropriate, therefore, at this point, and the moral is reinforced by the scene on a neighbouring capital where Jesus pardons the woman taken in adultery. Both in the narthex and the nave capitals are found that deal with the story of St. Paul and St. Anthony (engaged pillar south). In the narthex they are seen meeting in the desert, a theme that also appears on that great and mysterious work of art the Ruthwell Cross. At Vézelay the saints divide a loaf of bread above a little shrine enclosing two jars of water and two small dishes. In the nave (seventh pillar north side) a naïve but graphic group shows the lions digging St. Paul's grave while St. Anthony blesses the body of the saint wrapped up in what looks like a mummy case. St. Benedict, the founder of the great order to which Vézelay belongs, appears twice in the narthex. In the first (second pillar north) he is seen restoring a dead man to life, while a gravedigger looks on with a certain degree of detachment. In the

second (second pillar south) he remains impassive before temptation presented to him in the form of a beautiful woman. Incidents drawn from lives of the saints were clearly popular with the men who planned Vézelay. St. Anthony receives very rough treatment from a company of realistic demons in the nave (eighth pillar north). St. Eugenia appears on a capital of the seventh pillar north, and the same pillar on another side has the capital representing the burial of St. Paul in the desert. St. Eugenia was a lady who for many years successfully disguised her sex and rose to the position of abbot in a monastery of men. Accused of ravishing a woman, she was forced to give unanswerable proof of her innocence. The capital at Vézelay shows St. Eugenia seated between her accusers and opening the front of her habit. It is an interesting group, for though the sculptor is still hampered by his medium and cannot handle it freely, the figures, stiff though they are, are full of sincerity and feeling. The east side of this pillar, by the way, shows the execution of Agag, King of the Amalekites. What didactic value such an incident can have in company with St. Anthony and St. Eugenia, I must leave the symbolists to expound.

An attractive capital deals with an incident from the life of St. Martin of Tours (sixth pillar south). The pagans to whom he went to preach evolved a simple test of his miraculous powers. They decided to cut down a tree so that it should fall and crush the saint. This story is set out in delightful fashion at Vézelay. A palm tree raises its stylised branches right into the plinth, and energetic Pagans are hanging on to ropes with the object of pulling it down. St. Martin, a plump, unconcerned-looking figure, calmly makes the sign of the cross and the tree promptly falls, not only in the opposite direction, but on the heads of his persecutors. As at Autun, there are many allegorical subjects represented in terrifying fashion. Bad beasts abound. On the first pillar of the south aisle a birdlike monster (goaded thereto by a still more abominable demon) carries off a child in its beak and a dog in its claws. There is a capital at Chauvigny near Poitiers treated in much the same manner. On the

south side of this pillar, a man who holds up a ball to check the advance of a nude warrior riding on a dragon, looks like a variant of the basilisk story. The nude is not handled at Vézelay with the same beauty and freedom as at Autun, but the woman devoured by serpents—a symbol of lust—is a sinuous and graceful creature.

Some of the most attractive capitals at Vézelay are those taken from contemporary scenes of country life. The capital (pillar four south) of the miller with his mill, pouring the new-ground flour into a bag held by another man, is a charming piece of work, but apparently it has also a symbolic meaning. No less a person than Suger himself has left on record that a similar scene in a glass window at St. Denis was designed by him to symbolise the grinding by St. Paul of the Old Law, to produce the flour of the New Testament. Symbolic and natural values touch at this point, for if the sculptor was given this idea to carry out, he translated it into homely fashion by an incident of daily life within the common experience of the humblest worshipper. As with the harvest, so with the vintage. Wine clearly was a matter of as much importance to Burgundians in the twelfth century as in the twentieth. Two men pour baskets loaded with grapes into a primitive winepress (pillar five south side), and Monsieur Porée writes that the introduction on this capital of a man with bellows throws an interesting light on the presence of disease among the vines, and the measures taken then as now to combat it.

Scenes from the Old Testament are treated with great vigour. I think it may be said that the iconography of Vézelay is more concerned with the Old Law than the New. A beautiful elongated Judith, followed by a maid no less elegant, carries the head of Holofernes (third pillar north). The death of Absalom, an unfortunate youth hanging by his hair from the branches of a luxuriant tree (fifth pillar north), is shown with extraordinary verve and power. His horse gallops away to the right; his head is cut off by Joab on the left. The exasperated Moses, brandishing the tables of stone in face of the Golden Calf (second pillar north), is sculptured with rude power.

[*Photo. Edit. Giraudon*

VÉZELAY : CAPITAL OF HARVEST AND VINTAGE.

One other point in common must be noted between Vézelay and Autun—the very fine foliated capitals of both naves. If the sculptors came to grief many times over questions of perspective in the historiated groups, they have acquired perfect freedom of technique in their countless variations of the Corinthian capital. Foliage was clearly studied from life, and has been reproduced in stone with both power and skill.

A curious, not to say baffling, fact must be noted about the figure sculpture of the Madeleine. This splendid church dedicated to the penitent sinner has strangely enough failed to record her history on any capital of the nave or in the triple portal of the narthex. She appeared, it is true, on the lintel of the outer portal, but not as a conspicuous figure. Possibly her story was told in the choir where her shrine was situated, but if so the sculptures disappeared without leaving any record when the Gothic reconstruction took place. Many odd discrepancies mark the life of the twelfth century, and the absence of any image of the Madeleine in her own famous church must be numbered among them.

CHAPTER IX

AUTUN

Autun has a splendid church and an unreal history. Cities that play a great part in the world's history, and places of less importance that have held their own through the chances and changes of centuries, grew up because in the first instance their sites offered some natural advantages either for defence or commerce. Trade makes its appearance as a world factor at a very early stage in the world's history, and, however precarious the processes of manufacture and exchange, they were greatly facilitated by the presence of rivers and roads. Commerce, always on the outlook for arteries along which to push its wares, naturally cast a favourable eye on a city like London commanding a ford, or a settlement that grew up at the junction of two Roman roads. But Autun illustrates all the difficulties that dog the artificial creation of a town when these inducements are lacking. Created by the whim of the Emperor Augustus, it was in a special sense made, not born. We, who have to calculate the cost before we can shift a barrowload of bricks and mortar, can only sigh with envy when we realise the vast building schemes carried out by the Roman emperors. Let there be a city; and there was a city, and we are left guessing as to who bore the cost of so formidable an enterprise.

The emperor's command that a Roman city should be erected in Burgundy on the Via Agrippina—one of the main Roman roads through Gaul, was carried out with great thoroughness. Autun, or Augustodunum, as it was called, was constructed on a vast scale. It was surrounded by a wall nearly four miles in circumference, guarded by fifty-two towers. Augustus spared no pains to make his city the greatest in Gaul. Temples, palaces, and arenas sprang into being at his word. Famous

schools of rhetoric and learning attracted scholars from distant provinces. A grass-grown slope outside the present town preserves the unmistakable outline of a theatre built on a large scale. The amphitheatre, larger than those of Arles and Nîmes, was only second in size to the Coliseum itself. But, in spite of imperial favour, Autun, an artificial growth, struck no real roots in the soil, and its prosperity was short-lived. Both in imperial and mediæval times the real current of Burgundian life flowed elsewhere. The latter-day town of some 15,000 inhabitants, though a *chef-lieu d'arrondissement* and the seat of a bishop, has shrunk far within the limits of its ancient walls. Below the town the river Arroux winds its peaceful way through a wide-stretching plain encircled by a saucer-like range of low hills. Autun, crowned by its great church, lies at peace on the slopes of the Morvan under the Burgundian sun. The wooded rim of the saucer is dignified at this point by the name of the Montagne de Montjeu, and from the upper part of the town the eye ranges for miles over quiet farms and fields. All is space, and peace, and sunshine. Two fine gates, the Porte d'Arroux and the Porte St. André, remain of the four entrances that formerly pierced the Roman walls. It is a dull work for any place to live on memories of its past, but inevitably at Autun the ghosts are greater than the living men who conduct the humdrum affairs of a little country town today. A few crumbling ruins of temple, theatre, and arena; open spaces deserted and grass-grown alone remain as mute witnesses to the vanished power of Rome. But they serve to remind us that the eagles once flew over this quiet city, and that purple-robed emperors entered its gates in state.

Autun, though not an important city, was capital of Burgundy under the Dukes of the First Race. Subsequently the foundation of the cathedral early in the twelfth century by Hugh, Duke of Burgundy, gave her a position in ecclesiastical affairs that has been retained ever since. Like Vézelay, the cathedral at Autun owed its fame to the supposititious relics it guarded. Relics, as we saw in the last chapter, had a real cash value, for relics meant pilgrims,

and pilgrims meant money. Autun, as a pilgrimage centre, was in a strong position, for the cathedral laid claim to the bones of St. Lazarus. Few legends were more widespread or more popular in Southern France than those concerned with the landing in Provence of the family from Bethany—Lazarus, Martha, and Mary Magdalene. Burgundy found the story attractive, and appropriated both the legends and the bones of the saints. As early as the tenth century the monks at Autun made it known that, thanks to heavenly intervention, they had become possessed of the bones of St. Lazarus. A flow of miracles set in, and Autun grew in fame. The existing cathedral was begun in 1120, in order to provide better accommodation for the crowds. The work must have been carried on very rapidly, for twelve years later, in 1132, the new building was consecrated by Pope Innocent II., during his tour in Burgundy. Consecration did not, as we have seen, imply the final completion of a church, but indicates that an adequate portion was available for services. And Autun Cathedral, built in the form of a cross, was designed on a large scale. It is a church of very noble and harmonious proportions; though Flamboyant Gothic chapels, introduced by Cardinal Rollin in the fifteenth century, destroy the austerity of the Romanesque interior. To Cardinal Rollin, also, the cathedral owes its fine Gothic spire, legitimately built after the collapse of the Romanesque tower. The nave has seven bays and a broad transept, the line of the side aisles with their groined vaults being continued by two additional bays forming the choir. Burgundian architects showed, from the first, great courage in experimenting with the vault; and the barrel vault of Autun Cathedral, carried on pointed arches, is a fine performance. At first sight, the nave at Autun looks like a church of the Gothic transition. This, however, is merely coincidence. The cathedral was built in the early part of the twelfth century, and pointed arches were frequently used in Burgundy at this date. No church I know brings home more forcibly the debt that Romanesque architecture owes to Roman and Gallo-Roman art. The stamp of the classical is very strong. The beautiful

triforium, with its deep band of *rosaces*, had a blind arcade with fluted pilasters copied from the upper gallery of the Porte d'Arroux. The pilasters on the face of the piers in the nave are also fluted, and many of them have foliage capitals with a strong family likeness to the Corinthian order. All this goes to prove to what extent the mediæval builder drew his inspiration from the numerous classical remains of the Roman city. It is almost bewildering to find the vivid mediæval carving of the capitals in a setting that recalls principles of decoration inherited by Rome from Greece.

The historiated capitals in the nave at Autun are among the most remarkable in France. The variations in technique make it clear that they are not all the work of the same period or of the same hand. Some are more rude and archaic in execution than others. Scenes from the Old and New Testament, from fables, and from Lives of the Saints, supply the subject-matter. The whole menagerie of Romanesque beasts are here, too, in force. To me, the iconography is strangely mixed, and often quite unintelligible; but Abbé Terret, who knows his Breviary by heart and has devoted his life to the study of Burgundian religious art, is a convinced believer in the symbolic scheme of sculpture at Autun. He takes the view that the capitals of the nave are all part of a great scheme symbolising the struggle between Jerusalem and Babylon, or, in other words, the struggle between the Church of Christ and Satan. It is a great privilege at Autun to meet with Abbé Terret. This old priest, in his simple home, is a scholar whose spirit burns like a white flame of enthusiasm. The great works,* splendidly illustrated, that he has produced on Burgundian sculpture have put the Burgundian churches in a place apart among the Romanesque memorials of France.

Abbé Terret devotes two long chapters in his book on Autun to a detailed study of the capitals in the cathedral. But, for the reasons stated in Chapter V, I hesitate, without some reservations, to accept the full symbolic interpretation of every twelfth-century capital and carving.

* See Bibliography.

The individual taste of the sculptor and the exigencies of the work must have led to frequent modifications of whatever plan of moral instruction was laid down. At a time when secular art and secular literature practically had no existence, naturally the subject-matter of sculpture was drawn mainly from the Bible or legends of saints. But, it does not necessarily follow that the scenes represented were chosen invariably for their symbolic value, though they have often a moral significance.

The series begins inside the portal with four scenes from the life of Jacob. The struggle of Jacob with a vigorous angel is full of life, and so is the scene when he is preparing to lay his head on a very uncomfortable stone. However naïve the work, and whatever the faults in technique, a wonderful inspiration stirs and uplifts this Burgundian sculpture. The execution may at times be clumsy, but it is always sincere. And as, little by little, the technical difficulties are overcome, the stone flowers into beauty and power. The angels and other divine personages go about their business with a great fluttering of wings and draperies. There is a strange variety of animal sculpture, also of men riding on mythical beasts or engaged in mortal combat with them. One capital shows a hideous monster with a snake coming out of his mouth; on another a fiend, semi-human in shape, holds a luckless woman in his grip while a second demon hooks her with the same two-pronged fork in use among the Satanic company on the tympanum. There is a remarkable Temptation in the Wilderness—an enormous demon offering a huge stone to a diminutive Christ. Another phase of the same legend shows the Devil standing on a small Romanesque building like a footstool, from which he invites the Saviour to cast himself down.

An old story, subsequently repeated by Jacopo de Voragine in the "Golden Legend," is responsible for two striking scenes dealing with Simon Magus. In one of them the fall of the prophet, head first, is sculptured with immense vigour. A warrior pursuing a syren betrays strong Oriental influence, as do the whole series of birds and dragons. Some of the capitals are obscure. Some

illustrate the difficulties that beset the symbolist. A curious and well-known capital at Autun shows a poor young man being grasped by the hair by a demon who carries an axe. On the opposite side of the column he is equally menaced by a nude woman with one arm uplifted and the other flourishing a great sword. Archæologists have given the most varied explanations of this capital. To Abbé Terret it symbolises the Massacre of the Innocents; Monsieur Mâle thinks it conveys a solemn warning to youth to avoid the seductions of the fair sex. Neither conjecture seems to fit the scene, for the young man with folded hands looks incapable of adventure, and ladies who warn off admirers with swords do not err on the side of allurement. In the monastic age any study of the nude was hedged about by limitations, but it is clear that among the *imagiers* who worked at Autun there were men who experimented boldly with the human form, and took advantage of any subject that made the study possible.

Among the scenes of the Old Testament, the Ark resting on Ararat, the Holy Children in the Furnace, the Death of Cain, and Moses with the Calf of Gold, are full of naïve force. The Ark—a penthouse, very like its nursery prototypes—is impaled on a cone-shaped peak. The family are helping each other out of the Romanesque windows, while the animals patiently wait their turn. The Holy Children in the Furnace (represented by a deep Romanesque arch) are apparently chatting together and warming their hands before a row of highly stylised flames. Above them an angel stretches his mantle in protection. The Death of Cain shows a spirited group of figures, one with a long bow from which he has discharged the fatal arrow. The capitals of the Annunciation, and the series dealing with the Story of the Magi, are by a different and more skilled hand. The angel of the Annunciation is a beautiful and gracious figure as he delivers his message to the seated Mary. Unhappily, the capitals were grievously mutilated by the fall of the tower. Many of them are still in place in the nave, though some reproductions have been added. Others must be sought in a room over the south aisle.

Enough remains of the scene before Herod and the Magi to show that it was a striking group. The three Kings with their diadems and embroidered robes appear before a seated Herod, also richly dressed. Byzantine influence is very strong in these capitals. Everyone has gorgeous clothes. In the Adoration of the Magi, the Virgin, wearing a jewelled tunic, sits under an elaborate canopy with the Infant Jesus on her knee. The Child, also in a jewelled robe, stretches out a hand in gracious greeting to the three Kings, who bow reverently before Him. The Flight into Egypt is headed by St. Joseph, leading the ass on which the Mother and Child are seated. This bas relief has the curious feature of decorated wheels on which the ass and Joseph are treading. But the gem of the collection is the Vision of the Magi—one of the most beautiful and original works of the early twelfth century. The three Kings, wearing their crowns, are all asleep in one bed. They are covered up by a beautiful counterpane with a deep jewelled border that falls over them in heavy folds. Two of the Kings sleep on, but the third opens his eyes as the angel touches his hand, and with the other points in warning to the star carved on the abacus above their heads. The beauty of the angel, the sense of urgency in his warning gesture, the deep slumber of the Kings, last, but not least, the glorious counterpane—a domestic possession calculated to rouse the envy of any housewife—these are the elements in a unique composition. Abbé Terret states that this capital is an exact reproduction of an illuminated miniature in the Psautier de Paris. To the best of my knowledge, the Autun carving of the Magi stands alone. Genius was at work at Autun, as we shall see later on, and genius, though it may not be catching, tends to sweep up lesser men in its train.

Another capital, different in execution and iconography from those I have just described, is a beautiful rendering of that favourite Burgundian theme, the Rivers of Paradise. A nude youth in a helmet holds a water-pot from which the stream of water gushes forth. These figures in their grace and serenity recall the wonderful series of the Seasons and Virtues at Cluny. Whoever the

[*By permission of Abbé Terret.*

AUTUN : CAPITAL OF MAGI.

[P. 152

sculptor, clearly he had escaped from the spiritual fears of mediævalism, and had entered into the beauty, directness, and joy that Greek art first revealed to the world.

Like Vézelay, the nave at Autun has a remarkable series of foliage capitals. In no respect did the Romanesque sculptors show more originality than in the spirited experiments they made with the Corinthian capital. Inspiring themselves with the idea, rather than with the design, of the classical original, they worked out an infinite variety of foliage capitals, adapting to this end local flowers and grasses from the fields of France. These capitals already anticipate the joyous rationalism which marks the sculpture of the Gothic period.

Remarkable though are the capitals of the nave, the work that outstands at Autun is the great group of the Last Judgment that fills the tympanum of the porch. To the Abbé Terret, it all forms part of an iconographical plan, and, as the struggle between Jerusalem and Babylon is set out in the nave, so the final triumph of the Church is symbolised by the group over the porch.

It is very unfortunate that houses have been allowed to crowd themselves all round the cathedral, thus making it difficult to see this majestic work adequately set off. A long flight of steps leads up to the porch, which is, in effect, an outside continuation of the nave and side aisles. The porch is later in date than the church, and was built about 1187—apparently to meet the needs of leper pilgrims, who could not be allowed to enter the main body of the church. It is significant of the temper of the age, that the Duke of Burgundy, when giving permission for this porch to be built, made the express stipulation that it was not to be used as a tower or a rampart for purposes of siege or defence. The poor lepers, if excluded from the church, were given a great, if rather terrifying, work of art in compensation.

It is clear that Gislebertus, the sculptor of the tympanum at Autun—he has left us his name on the porch—was not only a great artist, but a man filled with the lively faith and fear of the Lord. Three large bays with round arches open on to the porch, the central bay being filled

with Gislebertus' famous masterpiece. Burgundy and Languedoc were pioneers in decorated tympana, and these groups were as popular among sculptors in the south as carved voussoirs in the west. The large surface to be filled offered great scope in composition and design. It led inevitably to concentration on a certain class of subject. The rounded shape of a tympanum, high in the middle and low at the sides, pointed to the need of a central figure round whom the composition could be grouped. The Ascension, the Last Judgment, or St. John's Vision in the Apocalypse of Christ in Glory, ob- obviously fulfilled this condition. The terrible contrasts of the Last Judgment had the double advantage of frightening the faithful, while giving every chance to the sculptor of proving his faith and skill.

The first impression made by the tympanum at Autun is the extreme elongation of the figures—elongated out of all proportion to natural dimensions. Drapery blown about by the wind and falling in many heavy folds, and a general sense of life and movement in these emaciated figures, are other special features of Burgundian sculpture. The technique of sculpture is still in its youth, every rule of perspective may be broken; some figures may be rough, others naïve; but across the centuries Gislebertus makes us feel the measure of passion and power that he brought to his task. For this was a man who felt what he said. The Day of Judgment was conceived by him as no remote theory, but as a great and terrible reality. Every figure in his work expresses anxiety, bliss, or despair. Everything and everyone is in motion. The angels, with trumpets proclaiming the Last Day, stagger back on themselves as though overcome by the great assize to which they are rousing the dead from their graves. An enormous figure of Christ in a mandorla fills the centre of the tympanum. He sits on a throne between emblems of the sun and moon, with hands outspread in judgment. The head has been destroyed, but the gesture of the hands and the folds of the long garment are very remarkable. Four angels hold up the rim of the mandorla, the pair at the top head downwards. Angels with trumpets appear on the outer

edge of the tympanum that meets the encircling arch. To the right and left of the central Christ are groups of saved and damned. The noise, the confusion, the terror of the Day of Judgment—never were these things more graphically portrayed than by Gislebertus.

On the lintel below the tympanum are a string of figures rising from their tombs. First come a group of faithful led by two bishops who, as is only seemly, appear less agitated than their flock. This is followed by a beautiful group of an angel to whose arms and wings three children cling with touching confidence. The guardian angel bends over them tenderly and points a finger to Heaven. A husband and wife rise from their tombs to be reunited in the last hour to a son (also disentangling himself from the grave), to whom the mother points eagerly. Three pilgrims, one wearing the Cross of Jerusalem, another the cockle shells of St. James of Compostela, complete the group to the left. Now the scene changes. An angel, no longer tender, but menacing, stands with a sword and repulses an evil-doer. The damned rise from their graves with faces marked by every appearance of anguish and despair. The horror is piled up by certain symbols attached to certain people. Avarice, wearing a bag round his neck, has his hand bitten by a serpent. Two enormous hands appear out of the upper edge of the lintel and seize another unhappy criminal by the neck. Lust, here as at Moissac, is represented by a woman whose breasts are devoured by a serpent. A drunkard striking his empty barrel is the only semi-humorous figure in this disastrous company. Above, on the tympanum itself, we find the sequence of the drama in natural order. On the right hand of Christ we see Paradise. A group of Apostles — tremendously elongated — watch the Judgment with reverence and awe. Children still cling in the same anxious way to the skirts of the angels, and there is a delightful carving of one child being hoisted bodily by an angel into the Heavenly City (which reproduces a Roman gate at Autun) while elect look out of the windows. Above this the Virgin Mary sits enthroned between two angels. The Virgin—let me say in passing—plays but

a modest and very secondary part in early twelfth-century sculpture. Her great cult, as we shall see, arises in the thirteenth century, when, at Chartres and at other Gothic cathedrals, she holds a position of supreme honour in the decorative scheme.

On the left of the Christ, St. Michael, also a great elongated angel in billowing draperies, holds the scales of judgment. The weighing of the souls is a very ancient tradition that Christian art almost certainly took from Egypt. Osiris with his scales, in a tomb of the Nile Valley, is a prototype of St. Michael at Autun. In this great scene the Devil—a very hideous Devil—struggles with St. Michael for the soul in the balance, but the archangel lays a hand on the scales and the fiend is defeated. Very attractive is a little soul flying off joyfully to Heaven, after being weighed and not found wanting. Satan, however, is given plenty of scope in the rest of the scene. Never were demons more terrifying; never were the pains of the damned more graphically pictured. The demons are dealing with their victims in no half-hearted spirit. One monster seizes two unhappy sinners by the neck and drags them to the furnace. Hell itself is represented as a narrow, coffin-shaped building—very stuffy and uncomfortable. Job's Leviathan, who was regarded by mediæval theology as an image of the Devil himself, appears belching a demon out of his jaws. At the top of the tympanum two Apostles, on the same level as the Virgin, watch the scene with the proverbial detachment of superior persons. It has often struck me that if a mediæval Hell is your portion, the great thing to do is to qualify as rapidly as possible to become a demon. Because whatever the fate of the damned, demons, so it is clear, are enjoying themselves enormously poking other people into the flames.

Historiated capitals support the archivolts of the tympanum. Like the capitals in the nave, their subjects are drawn, not only from the Old and New Testaments, but from legendary sources. It is a little difficult to grasp the connecting link between themes so remote from one another as Elders of the Apocalypse, the Wolf and the Crane, the Banishment of Hagar, St. Jerome and the Lion,

the Presentation in the Temple, and the Defeat of Goliath. Upholders, however, of the symbolist theory see in them further episodes concerned in the great struggle between God and Satan. Of the three archivolts of the portal, one is decorated with medallions of the Signs of the Zodiac and Labours of the Months, and another with a wreath of foliage. The sculptures of the third archivolt have disappeared. The central pillar of the portal, with the figures of Lazarus and his sisters, is a modern reproduction carefully copied from a model at Vézelay.

The tympanum at Autun has suffered many vicissitudes. From 1766 to 1834 Gislebertus' work was covered up by a sheet of plaster, its sculpture offending the æsthetic susceptibilities of the then Chapter of the cathedral. The plaster was the only redeeming feature in an epidemic of destruction, rampant at the period, for at least it preserved the work it concealed. I have often had occasion in this book to speak of the melancholy losses inflicted by violence, both religious and political, on the churches of France. But canons, who do the work of destroying angels under the guise of culture, are happily exceptional figures. The Revolution had its fling at Autun as elsewhere, but the irreparable damage done to the cathedral was inflicted by its own special guardians.

Standards of taste, as we look back on them in the past, may well give us pause. Is any absolute standard possible when we think of former aberrations? How was it that our forebears could offer incense before the shrine of so many false gods, and neglected altars on which the true fire smouldered? But, salutary thought, shall we in turn be arraigned by our grandchildren after the same fashion? Will they regard the Cubists and the Vorticists as misunderstood Leonardos, or will they point to their work as yet another illustration of the Age of Confusion? Complete confidence on either point seems doubtful when we remember the views of the art critics of the eighteenth century on mediæval work. Pundits who heaped abusive adjectives on mountains were no less shocked by the churches of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Stendhal paid a visit to Autun, and Abbé Terret quotes a real gem

from the journal in which he records his impressions of the cathedral. At the time of his visit the Last Judgment had disappeared under its cover of plaster, and the new surface thus obtained was gaily painted in the Rococo style with a medallion of Christ surrounded by flowers and ribbons. I am convinced that the head of Gislebertus' Christ was knocked off by the canons because it interfered with the even surface of the plaster. The historiated capitals of the columns supporting the archivolts, however, remained, and this is what Stendhal says of them:

"La façade de St. Lazare est fort bien. Le sacristain m'a fait remarquer le loup et la cigogne, Androclès et son lion sculptés sur deux chapiteaux à gauche en entrant. Combien cette sculpture attriste l'œil qui vient de jouir des proportions de l'antique! Quelle laideur, grand Dieu! Il faut être bronze pour étudier notre architecture ecclésiastique."

Such being the view of a distinguished writer, it is not surprising that the canons of St. Lazare had set to work at an earlier date to purge their cathedral of the reproach of mediævalism, and bring it into line with the taste of a more elegant and cultured generation. It must be admitted that they did their job thoroughly. The Flamboyant rood screen, built by Cardinal Rollin in the fifteenth century, was probably an inappropriate addition to a Romanesque church, but it was certainly not for that reason that the Chapter ordered its wholesale demolition in 1748. In 1766 they turned their attention to the choir and its precious example of Romanesque work—the tomb of St. Lazarus. The tomb behind the High Altar was built in the form of a little church in red, white, and black marble. It was the work of a monk named Martin, and the fragments of sculpture now preserved in the Musée Lapidaire indicate, all too surely, what the quality of the mausoleum must have been. Sculpture in the round—not bas reliefs, but figures—had attained precocious development at Autun. Statues of the Saviour, of Martha and Mary, and of St. Peter and St. Andrew were grouped round the tomb. The figures of Martha, Mary, and St. Andrew are not only noble works, finely executed, but

they are instinct with expression. Martha raising the corner of her cloak to her face is an embodiment of grief. I know no figure more moving in religious art. The Musée Lapidaire and the Musée Rollin at Autun both repay a careful visit, and are essential to any close study of Burgundian sculpture. The bones of the saint were wrapped in a splendid piece of embroidered silk with horsemen, hawks and leopards, and a gorgeous border. This, happily, is still preserved in the Bishop's Palace.

The monks had naturally spared no effort to make the monument worthy of the saint whose bones were deposited in their church. These considerations had no weight with the eighteenth-century Chapter. The whole tomb was swept away, its statues broken up, and the priceless carvings scrapped and used for building material. Fine mediæval metal work was melted down, and the twelfth-century mosaic pavement of the sanctuary, with the Signs of the Zodiac, was torn up. On the pretence of making more room in the choir, several fine tombs were mercilessly destroyed, and the splendid fifteenth-century tapestries were sold. The work of destruction completed, the Chapter were at great pains to remodel the church on what they held to be more suitable lines. The walls of the sanctuary were dressed up with multi-coloured marbles and Corinthian columns. Plump-looking angels, with puffed-out cheeks, now cling to wreaths hung from classical braziers. Metal panels of angels, variously occupied, were inserted between the encircling columns. One of the mixed-up gilt horrors, known as Glories, was put in the centre of the apse behind the High Altar. We have all been in churches where a little well-directed destruction would be most helpful; but, alas! revolutionaries never do their work intelligently, and, at Autun, these eighteenth-century objects of " bigotry and virtue " escaped scot-free during the Terror. The sanctuary, with its trivial and inappropriate decoration, is a lamentable end to the splendid mediæval nave. It would be a poor look-out for the Cupids if one night the beasts came to life and dealt with them faithfully. The nave must have been a sore trial to the canons, but, short of pulling down the

church, it was not possible to reconstruct the whole building. Luckily, too, the capitals were at such a height that, probably, it was not thought worth while to destroy them.

So far as the outside of the church was concerned, the tympanum of the main portal was plastered up, the figures of Lazarus and his sisters destroyed, and domes were added to the Romanesque towers. Irreparable damage was also done to the north portal. The tympanum representing the Resurrection of Lazarus was destroyed, and unfortunately no drawing or description exists to give us any idea of how the subject was treated. The Temptation of Adam and Eve, carved on the lintel, was also destroyed—indeed, all the mediæval sculpture was swept away except one archivolt and four historiated capitals; to be replaced, of course, by the same Rococo ornament that disgraced the tympanum.

No doubt seems to have disturbed the minds of the Chapter as to the wholly admirable result of their labours. Abbé Terret quotes a letter from an admiring colleague, exalting the splendid work carried out, and saying that, thanks to it and the excellent taste shown, Autun Cathedral now ranked as one of the finest in Burgundy. The bas reliefs were used as ashlars, and, by a miracle of good fortune, the figure of Eve from the lintel was found in two pieces built into the wall of a house in the town. The fragments, thus strangely recovered, are in the safe keeping of Abbé Terret, and I saw them in the courtyard of his house.

It is not, I think, too high a claim to suggest that the figure of Eve is the finest example of sculpture that has come down to us from the Romanesque period. I am not forgetting the splendid Angel of the Annunciation at Toulouse, but it belongs to the borderland when Gothic is within easy hail, whereas the Autun Eve is much earlier in date. It is almost bewildering in the first and second quarter of the twelfth century to find this magnificent nude figure, no whit inferior in quality to the recognised masterpieces of classic art. The fruit and leaves of an apple tree are grouped with consummate skill about the bas relief. Eve is represented as a recumbent figure,

[*By permission of Abbé Terret.*

AUTUN : BAS RELIEF OF EVE.

with one hand to her ear who leans forward and listens by the tree of good and evil. On the extreme right a demon's claw grasps a bunch of apples and leaves. Though Eve looks away from the tempter, one sinuous arm is stretched backwards and holds an apple in the beautifully shaped hand. Long braided hair falls on the shoulders of the woman, whose white body is half concealed by a fig tree. In this superb figure the genius of the sculptor has known how to express, not only feminine seduction and grace, but also the conflicting emotions of the fatal hour—anxiety, eagerness, indecision. The eyes are wide open, the lips apart, as though Eve is about to utter some hesitating reply to the serpent's words. It is reasonable to conclude that the figure of Adam filled the missing half of the lintel, and that the tree stood in the centre. But, save the matchless figure of Eve, the whole group has perished. What are we to think of the men who deliberately destroyed such a masterpiece, and with it all trace of its creators ? For we cannot hope now to pierce the veil of silence and darkness at Autun. Beyond the name of Gislebertus and the monk Martin, we know nothing of the sculptors who formed part of the Autun *atelier*. Possibly their genius was as little understood by their contemporaries as by the iconoclasts of the eighteenth century. But enough of their work remains to prove that in the early days, when sculpture was rousing herself from the long sleep, some unknown men, gifted with vision and power, dowered art anew with forms of beauty that have enriched man's spiritual heritage for all time.

CHAPTER X

A DIGRESSION FROM THE TWELFTH TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY: BROU

Brou, coupled with the name of Matthew Arnold, has left in my mind a distinct sense of grievance. Haunted by the beautiful lines of the closing part of "The Church at Brou," I had long wanted to visit this monument of conjugal affection, on which a woman, widowed in the heyday of happiness, had lavished so much love and so much splendour. It was worth an effort, I thought, to see the place that had inspired a famous tribute in English verse, and a visit to Switzerland provided the opportunity.

Now I knew, of course, that Matthew Arnold had drawn heavily on the licence conceded to poets in his geographical details. Even a cursory glance at the map shows that Brou does not stand high in a Savoy valley or on the slopes of the Jura. Still, there are undulations and foothills that with a little imagination . . . But the day when I found myself left at the station of Bourg-en-Bresse, in the middle of a fat plain without a hill in sight, made me rub my eyes in perplexity. It is all very well for Shakespeare to do preposterous things with geography, to give Bohemia a seaboard, and so on, but one does not expect such liberties from a modern poet who was also an official of the Board of Education. I had come from Geneva on a grey day, and every trace of the mountains had vanished. Confronting me was a dull-looking little town, and the permanent way of the P.L.M. stretching north and south, so it seemed, into infinity. A sense of depression stole over me as I stood on the platform while the uniformed officials of the railway averted their eyes coldly from myself and my suitcases. That at small stations on the P.L.M. no one will carry your hand luggage is a new and uncomfortable variant of latter-day travel in France, not always realised by English tourists. Hand luggage, so a haughty

young lady in the ticket office informed me, was only carried *par l'amabilité du personnel*, and the personnel apparently was not feeling amiable that day. It is never wise to argue the point with a Frenchman or a Frenchwoman on his or her own ground. So I received the information politely, and having dumped my effects, thanked God, not for the first time, for England in general, and the kindly folk of the London, Midland, and Scottish Railway in particular.

The problem of how to spend some crowded hours of glorious life in Bourg-en-Bresse confronted me as I emerged on the station square. The railway lies a little way from the town, and there was nothing particularly exhilarating about the inconspicuous houses in sight. Also, it showed signs of raining. My sense of grievance against Matthew Arnold deepened. Where were the hills and streams and valleys of the poem? Where was the church itself, for whose sake I had made an inconvenient journey and forsworn the joys of the express to Dijon? The country was dull and flat, and heavily cultivated; the guide book informed me I had reached the home of the super fowl—*volaille de Bresse*. As my visit fell between meals, the local chicken held no possibility of thrill or comfort for me. Romance seemed to ooze out of my toes as I mounted a high wagonette whose owner undertook to drive me to the faubourg where stands the Church of Brou. But the wagonette cheered me up a little as we set out on a stately trot to seek fortune afresh. It is part of the pleasure of travelling in the byways of France that you find rare exhibition pieces in the shape of conveyances elsewhere extinct since your youth. We made a progress slow but sure along various undistinguished streets called after heroes of the Republic. And then with a gasp I found we had arrived. The large church in the Flamboyant style, standing in somewhat forlorn fashion in a field, was clearly the lion that I had tracked down at some pains. The paltry houses of a rather dingy suburb stretched away into the plain. Even on a grey spring day the road looked hot and dusty. At no time could the site of this church have been other than trite and meaningless. In a plain

one field may be as good as another, but in France one has seen, over and over again, how the genius of her architects overcomes the difficulty of a poor site by a stately disposition of the buildings. Clearly art had not triumphed over natural difficulties on this occasion. Brou, however, as will appear later on, was not designed by a Frenchman. I began to understand why Matthew Arnold would have none of Bourg-en-Bresse, and had spirited church and story alike into a more romantic setting.

Struggling as best I might with a certain feeling of disappointment, I sat down on a wall and took stock of the situation. I had come a long journey to see this church, and whatever the inside might prove, I found myself looking at the exterior in a critical spirit. The proportions seemed to me to lack distinction. Everywhere a superabundance of tracery full of curves and twists betrayed not only late Gothic, but Gothic that had got quite out of hand. But I am very glad to have seen Brou, and to any traveller to whom the chance presents itself, I would say, do not fail to visit Bourg-en-Bresse. For Brou is not only a wonderful monument of human affection, and contains much that is very lovely, but it is the end of a chapter—the magnificent tailpiece to a story the first words of which were written long before on such a building as the Crypt of St. Bénigne. Church architecture has run its course, first through the splendid expression of the Romanesque, then through the further development, no less splendid, of the Gothic. Brou rings the curtain down: it is *das Ende vom Lied.*

First let us recall the story of the woman whose sorrows give so poignant a human interest to the church at Brou. Margaret of Austria, daughter of Maximilian I., must be numbered among the great *politiques* who made much history in their time and age. Intrigue and influence among a few women made up for the intolerable position of subservience of the sex in general. But great ladies had a certain amount of scope if intelligent enough to make the best of their opportunities, and Margaret of Austria must be counted among them. Some historians look upon her as the real founder of the House of Austria,

whose interests she served unswervingly. She brought up her nephew Charles V., who treated her subsequently with scant kindness. But he learnt statesmanship at her feet, and his dominant position in Europe was largely the fruits of her training. Even for a royal princess, whose common lot it was to be a matrimonial pawn in the game of kings, Margaret had a chequered career. Born in 1480, she was affianced at the age of three to the Dauphin Charles, and sent to France to be brought up at the court of his father, Louis XII. Subsequently some move in the tortuous game played by kings led to a rupture of the contract. Charles VIII., having ascended the throne, came to the conclusion that his royal hand could be bestowed more profitably on that spitfire lady, Anne of Brittany, than on an Austrian princess. So Margaret, after a childhood cradled in the state becoming to a future queen of France, was returned to her father in 1491. The humiliation bit deep into the heart of the little girl: the woman never forgot or forgave the affront put upon the child. In later years France was to drain a bitter cup, largely prepared by the ceaseless hostility of Margaret of Austria, rejected bride of her king.

Bad stars met in the horsocope of this gifted woman. Married in 1496 to John of Aragon, she saw him die within the year. Then came the turning-point of her career: her great passion for Philibert of Savoy, to whom she was married in 1501. The duke had the reputation of being the handsomest man in Europe, and when he died in 1504, not from a hunting accident as described by Matthew Arnold, but more prosaically from pleurisy, the sun of happiness set for ever in his wife's heart. She mourned him but once, and that was all her days, though like many proud and energetic women she mourned him not in the cloister but in the busy ways of life. With Philibert of Savoy were buried all the personal values which make life worth living, but, whatever her grief, she wrapped herself round with the mantle of the world's affairs and turned resolutely to other things.

In 1507 Margaret was appointed Governess of the Netherlands, which she ruled till her death twenty-three years

later in 1530. (May I say, by the way, that two Margarets of Austria, one the aunt and the other the daughter of Charles V., both held the post of Governess of the Netherlands? Whereby much great and glorious confusion arises over the affairs of two distinct generations. Brou, of course, is wholly concerned with the older and greater Margaret.) A story of her youth gives us some measure of her courage and high spirit. In 1497 she set forth by sea to join her affianced husband, the Prince of Aragon, in Spain. The Channel gave the vessel a taste of that enduring quality which successive generations of travellers have had occasion to deplore. So severe was the gale that passengers and crew gave themselves up for lost. It is easy to picture the scene of confusion and dismay on board the miserable little ship. But while her attendants doubtless wept and prayed, we find the girl of seventeen calmly occupied in the composition of a jesting epitaph to serve as an identification mark for a body washed up by the waves. In a little box tied to her arm, Margaret put a slip of paper with the lines "Ci gît Margot la gente demoiselle, Qu'eut deux marys et si mourut pucelle." The courage that faces death in so unshaken a mood carries a man or woman far, and Margaret in later life did not belie the promise of her youth.

She proved a great ruler of the Netherlands, and though an adept at keeping her neighbours weak by stirring up strife between them, gave her own country peace. We see her in Brussels spinning the web of her intrigues, always dealing shrewd blows at France, now by the Treaty of Cambrai, now by the League of 1515, now by setting France and England by the ears, now by concluding with Louise de Savoie a treaty as advantageous to Austria as it was disastrous to France. The published volumes of her correspondence with Maximilian show how father and daughter kept every detail, big and small, of European policy under review. Added to all this, she was a munificent patron of the arts, and her collections at Mechlin and the library she formed there were famous. It is pleasant to remember she concerned herself in getting a pension for Erasmus. And all the time she was a woman

with a hole in her heart, and the real kernel of things lay for her, not in her splendid court at Brussels, but in a distant province, where at Bourg-en-Bresse she had designed a church on magnificent lines as a burial-place for the adored husband of her youth. Verily a tragic picture of the two sides of the moon in human character —the world's side of a busy woman of affairs, patient, unscrupulous, with a standard of political morality no better than that of her time and age; and the other side of a sleepless grief, turned away from the crowd, that knew no healing. "Fame for a woman is splendid mourning," wrote Madame de Stael. Duchess Margaret would have said Amen to that aphorism.

Brou was begun by the duchess within a few months of the death of Philibert. The province was devastated at the time by plague and famine. There was great poverty in the district, and Margaret's advisers looked with marked disfavour on what they regarded as the ill-advised scheme of a woman unhinged by grief. To these discouragements the duchess turned a deaf ear. An unfulfilled pledge of an earlier generation weighed heavily upon her. In 1480 her mother-in-law, Margaret of Bourbon, had vowed to found a Benedictine convent at Brou if her husband, then seriously ill, was restored to health. The Duke of Savoy duly recovered, but no further steps were taken to fulfil the promise. The age was superstitious, and in the tragedy that had befallen her young husband Margaret may have seen a proof of divine displeasure. To fulfil and more than fulfil the earlier vow became the main purpose of her life. At Brou, therefore, she planned not only a church but a convent where the incense of perpetual prayer should surround the tombs of her husband, herself, and her mother-in-law.

Work on the monastery began in 1505, and was pushed forward rapidly. There was talk of giving the order for the tombs to the famous Michel Colombe. But he was a very old man, and the scheme fell through. Subsequently Van Boghem, a Flemish master mason, was put in charge of the *atelier* at Brou and drew up plans for the

church in 1512. Margaret, who saw the convent begun, had by that time left Brou to take up her arduous career as Governess of the Netherlands. But she remained in close touch with Van Boghem, who was compelled twice a year to visit Brussels and discuss with her every minute detail of his plans. By 1522 the whole of the choir was finished, the tombs were in place, and the nave was half built. The statues, designed by Jean van Roome and executed by Conrad Mert, *tailleur d'images* to the duchess, were ready in 1532. Good progress had also been made with the fine glass windows.

Meanwhile, Margaret felt her work in the Netherlands was drawing to an end. Throughout long years filled with the cares of government her dream had been to end her days in the convent founded at Brou. She was still a young woman as we reckon age today—only fifty-two—but life had pressed heavily on her, and she craved for rest. "Le soir de la vie arrivait: Marguerite avait mis chaque chose à sa place." The work at Brou was nearly finished, and the dedication of the church within sight. Charles V., firmly established on the imperial throne, was more than capable of managing his affairs in his own disagreeable way. The moment had come when Margaret could leave Flanders and devote herself to the completion of the church she had never seen. During twenty-two years spent in the Netherlands she had found it impossible to visit Brou. Not one stone of the church was in place when she left the province in 1507. It had cost the almost incredible sum for those days of over a million sterling, and its splendour was the talk of France and the Netherlands. Little wonder that she longed to see the marvels she had called into existence; to be present at the dedication of the church; to pray by the tomb of the husband to whom she had raised a priceless monument.

And then fate dealt this woman a final blow. She died at Mechlin in November, 1530, on the very eve of her departure for Brou. There is a legend about an accident to her foot, reinforced by a curious flaw, accidental or otherwise, in the marble foot of the figure on her tomb. Whether or not the clumsy surgery of the day led to her

death it is difficult to know. The cruel and ironical fact alone remains that her dead body was brought back to Brou and buried with every pomp in 1532. But with the living eye she never saw the church from the adornment of which no care of State, no political preoccupation had ever turned her mind. In the church you are shown the chapel and the oratory of the duchess, the latter supplied with a comfortable fireplace. Probably many visitors, like myself, have had some fancy picture before their eyes of Margaret wrapped in a big cloak, keeping herself warm by the ample hearth of her oratory as she listened to Mass. But history, alas! destroys this illusion. Margaret was never to know whatever measure of consolation she might have found through offices of praise and prayer in her own church. "Infortune, Fortune, Fort Une" is the motto she devised for herself after Philibert's death, and it appears on her tomb and in other parts of the church. Scholars differ as to the exact meaning of this somewhat cryptic phrase. But the brave words tell of the woman's courage no less than of her grief.

What, then, of this church on which so great a wealth of love and care and effort had been lavished?

Despite the eulogies of writers, and the asterisks with which the guide book drips, the church at Brou to me, at least, is an unsatisfying piece of work. Say what one may, it is an example of architecture in decadence, though much of the detail is very beautiful. Primarily, in design and execution, it is a gift of Flanders to France, and, with certain reservations about the glass windows, cannot in any sense be regarded as typically French. Architect, sculptors, master workmen, were all Flemish. It was part of the misfortune that dogged Margaret's life that she fell on a bad moment architecturally; Gothic was expiring under the weight of its own ineptitudes, and its decadence was hastened by the breath of both Renaissance and Reform. It had reached a stage when it was apt to be noisy and futile. Had the money and effort spent on Brou passed through the hands of the master builders of the twelfth or thirteenth centuries, Margaret's name might well have been associated with one of the noblest fanes in Christendom.

As it is, she was the victim architecturally of her century —a century that had lost touch of fundamental principles and had degenerated into *tours de force* and mere prettiness.

The big façade of the west end is unsatisfactory. It is too broad and too heavy for the lace-like tracery it carries. As against this, the tower peeping over the steep roofs seems small and insignificant. It is only fair to remember, however, that the façade was completed after Margaret's death, in a spirit of grudging haste, by Charles V., whose sole anxiety it was to wind up the affairs of Brou as rapidly and as inexpensively as possible. But, whatever the cause, we are faced with the results. We have travelled a long way from the tympana of the Romanesque churches with their solemn representations of Christ in Glory and of the Last Judgment. Over the doorway at Brou, Philibert and Margaret are presented by their patron saints to an Ecce Homo. Below the trumeau of the door is St. Nicholas, flanked to right and left by St. Peter and St. Paul. Above is St. Andrew. None of this work is very exciting, and the general effect of the façade is confused—the main lines obscure, the weight of detail too great.

On entering the church we find a spacious nave, though again the proportions cannot be regarded as satisfactory. The pillars from which the arch springs without any capital—a peculiarity of Gothic in decay—are too bulky for their height. The spring of the vault in fact takes up nearly half the total height of the church. This in turn makes the general effect look heavy. The great wealth of the church is lavished on the choir, which Margaret consecrated as a shrine to be made worthy of its supreme jewels, the tombs.

The choir is separated from the nave by one of the screens that came into favour at the beginning of the sixteenth century. It was necessary at Brou to shut off the choir from the nave in order to provide a communicating passage between the rooms destined for the duchess and her oratory. The screen and the intricate carvings of the choir stalls lead us finally to the heart of the church, the three wonderful tombs of Philibert of Savoy, Margaret

of Bourbon, and Margaret of Austria. Philibert lies in the centre facing the High Altar, his mother to the right, his wife to the left. Of the three tombs that of Margaret of Bourbon is the simplest, though this qualification at Brou does not imply any lack of ornament. The stone image of the duchess lies on a tomb of black marble with sides surrounded by attractive angels and *pleurants* in alabaster. The tomb stands in a recess of the wall, and is framed by a rich canopy covered with statuettes, flowers, and other phantasies. The tomb of Philibert is built on a different plan that became fashionable in the sixteenth century. Above on the black marble slab lies the carved statue of the prince, a noble figure in armour, surrounded by a group of dolorous angels, adorable children despite their tears. Beneath this upper tier, three parts concealed by a forest of little figures, pillars, arcades, is a second carving of the prince as a corpse. Particularly charming are the ten Virtues grouped round the tomb—little figures on which Margaret of Austria lavished special care. Her own tomb is the most magnificent of the three. Like that of Philibert, it is in two tiers. The duchess lies in the majesty of her ducal robes, her head turned towards her husband as his is turned towards her. On her breast lies a medallion of Philibert. The haughty countenance, the firm chin, the clear-cut outline of the face—all this gives us a very definite picture of a remarkable woman. And beneath lies the pitiful statue of the corpse, older, more resigned, more weighted by cares and age than the great lady above. The canopy under which the duchess rests is of a grandeur so distracting that the eye gives up the task of attempting to grasp its detail. "Ces dais, merveilles de patience et de virtuosité, donnent peut-être le dernier mot de la folie décorative de Brou"*—and some of us, I fear, are slightly relieved that the last word has been spoken. For, exquisite though much of this work, we have reached saturation point in ornament and feel it can go no further.

I mentioned Brou when speaking of the tombs of the dukes of Burgundy at Dijon. There is obvious kinship between the older and later memorials, but a hundred

* Victor Nodet, "L'Église de Brou."

years and more had passed since Claus Sluter worked at Champmol, and decadence had gone far in the interval. These questions remain matters of individual taste, but to me at least the tombs at Dijon touch the limit of human splendour without overstepping the mark, whereas Brou has gone beyond it.

The stained glass windows in the church are very fine. Though designed in Flanders, they were executed by an *atelier* assembled at Brou and are in the main of French workmanship. These windows have analogies with others in the district, and one of the men in charge, Antoine Voisin, is known to have lived at Lyons. The quality inbred in all good French work once again asserts itself here, especially in the five splendid windows of the apse and the window in Margaret's special chapel—often called the Chapel of the Seven Joys.

Glass, like architecture, has changed since the glories of Chartres first dazzled the twelfth century. By the sixteenth century, stained glass windows have become a picture and are out to tell a tale. They set forth at length the virtues of pious founders kneeling with their families, who are presented to the Powers of Heaven on lines of strict court etiquette. Possibly the craftsmen wearied themselves a little of the long heraldic stories they were called upon to carry out. For, needless to say, the duke and duchess or their emblems appear and reappear many times. The arms of the province, the scutcheons of the royal pair, the palace of Château d'Ain where Philibert died, are all reproduced. In the window of the Assumption the artist has not scrupled to make the figures of the duke and duchess larger and more important than that of the Virgin herself. For all their piety, kings and princes in the Middle Ages dealt with the Holy Family and even the Trinity on even terms. If not at ease in Zion, unquestionably they were haughty in Heaven. It is very unusual to find glass so perfectly preserved, but a miracle protected Brou at the time of the Revolution. Apparently the local inhabitants, who were proud of the church, petitioned for its preservation as a national monument. It was accordingly used as a forage depot and filled with hay and

corn. Hence the delicate carvings and sculpture, packed snugly away under the hay, were preserved intact till happier days returned. The windows, blocked up with fodder, owed their salvation to the same cause.

The chapel of Margaret stands on the north side of the apse just behind her tomb. Here as elsewhere we find the same wealth of ornament. The retable, in white marble, of the Seven Joys of Mary is a marvel of intricate and beautiful sculpture. It is thoroughly Flemish in feeling, and the scenes depicted are more suggestive, perhaps, of ducal personages or wealthy merchants in the Netherlands than the modest family life at Nazareth. Van Boghem's wish was to make this chapel the *chef d'œuvre* of the church, but Margaret's death cut short his plan. That catastrophe must have hit the architect very hard. After years of labour, and with the goal in sight, he found himself confronted, not by an appreciative princess, but by indifferent executors only anxious to finish the work with as little trouble as possible. Much sadness and much disillusion must have entered into the making of Brou, and there is something sad about the place today. The church has become a monument in the expressive French phrase *désaffecté pour le culte.* With every religious accessory swept away, the interior is inexpressibly bleak and lacking in atmosphere. Such a monument of human affection wants Catholic ritual to give it warmth and colour, and monks or nuns who pray for the repose of the souls of the faithful departed. For at the long last it is on its human more than on its artistic side that Brou appeals and will continue to appeal. The *gardien* at least is friendly and sympathetic and immensely proud of the monuments. I asked him whether he knew the English poem on Brou, and his answer was to produce a volume of Matthew Arnold for my benefit. So in the very shadow of the tombs I read again the poignant lines laid by a poet of another race and age as a final tribute on the altar of affection at Brou.*

Brou has been likened to a reproduction in stone of Mechlin lace. Lace is the keynote and possibly the

* See Note at end of chapter.

judgment on the church. The decoration in detail is exquisite: marguerites and cross swords, the knot of Savoy, the initials P. and M., these things are reproduced in texture as fine as gossamer. But it is surely the business of stone to look like stone, and not embroidery for a pocket handkerchief. The genii that watch round the tomb of Philibert are adorable little objects. I should have liked to smuggle one of them home. At the same time, " What a poppet!" or " You pretty pet! " are not the words which should rise to one's mind involuntarily in a church. It would never occur to anyone to think what charming souvenirs could be made from bits broken off the capitals at Autun or the porch at Moissac. The Royal Portal at Chartres brings most people to their knees. But there would be no question of carrying off a king or queen to serve as a chimney ornament. In this note of rather trivial suggestion lies the fundamental criticism that can be brought against Brou. All concerned gave of their best to the work, and it was their misfortune, not their fault, to be caught in the ebb and not the high tide of a great expression in art.

What Brou really brought home to me was the value and necessity of the Renaissance. In this realisation I found the main fruits of my pilgrimage, and for the same reason I have told the story of Brou in a book on Romanesque France. The cycles of taste are fruitful in revenge, and the foolish disparagement of Gothic by the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries has given way in turn to criticism no less acid of the classical revival. But this lamentable spectacle of Gothic reeling to its end makes one realise from how great a weight of error the discipline and sobriety of classical forms and classical outline rescued Europe in the sixteenth century. Man is the product of an ever-growing experience and cannot stand still in any one phase, spiritual or intellectual. Ascetic and ecclesiastical values had played for centuries a dominant part in affairs. Then comes the moment when humanism returns with a fresh assertion of the beauty and worth of the world as we know it. For the moment mystical ideas drop out of sight and are replaced by something more

positive. Architecture here as elsewhere registers the change that Renaissance and Reform were effecting in the mind of Europe. The broken curves of Flamboyant Gothic had collapsed in an effort to scale Heaven; the classical architrave running parallel with earth brought men back to a more sober appreciation of the limitations of time and space. Dreams of Eternity grow dim in a world full of good things and very pleasant to live in. All the values alter, and man feels that he has added new dignity to his stature now he rules in a practical kingdom, conscious of the powers within himself, and for the first time not a little sceptical of possible interference by august personages dwelling in a remote Heaven.

Note to Brou

In the Library of the British Museum I came across a poem on *l'Église de Brou* by an obscure writer, M. G. de Moyria, who lived in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. This slender volume, published at Bourg in 1835, contains an Introduction by Edgar Quinet, a writer of some distinction in his day. This Preface is remarkable for the close relationship it bears to certain passages in Matthew Arnold's poem. The resemblances can hardly be accidental, and it may be of interest to reproduce side by side the French prose and the English poem.

" Ce dernier monument d'une architecture défaillante ne fut pas élevé comme ceux d'une époque antérieure par les vœux de générations qui se renouvelaient de siècles en siècles. Il naquit d'une pensée individuelle et isolée. Ce ne fut pas la main robuste d'un peuple tout entier qui l'éleva sur le fondement de la foi; ce fut une main de femme qui tissa comme Magdelaine ce long suaire de marbre où sans le savoir elle ensevellisait un monde. Et quand le soir de sa vie arrive et qu'elle a elle-même mis chaque chose à sa place, les fleurs de marbre qui ne se fanent pas dans le jardin du Christ et les morts dans le tombeau, elle vient pieds nus se coucher auprès de son époux dans le monument de sa pensée, et c'est de cette heure seulement que commence pour elle le vrai mariage dans son duché éternel, quand les fanfares ne sonneront plus pour la chasse, quand son époux sur son cheval fougueux ne poursuivra plus jamais le sanglier dans la forêt, et qu'elle ne l'attendra plus en vain jusqu'à la nuit en sanglotant sur sa tour. Tout est préparé pour la noce spirituelle. La chambre nuptiale est close par une draperie de

pierre. Les époux ont dépouillé leurs corps mortels qui gisent sur le pavé. Ils ont revêtu sur leur dais la vie nouvelle. Les voilà qui dorment leurs sommeils de marbre. Qui pourrait raconter leurs songes plus blancs que l'albâtre des tombeaux! Quand leurs froides paupières se soulèvent ils voient les arceaux sur leurs têtes, et la lumière transfigurée des vitraux et la Vierge et les Saints immobiles à leurs places; et ils pensent en eux-mêmes: c'est ici l'Eternité. Ils n'entendent pas l'orage qui ébranle au dehors la foi sur son pilier; et ils se reprennent à rêver sur leurs durs chevets, de duchés, de vassaux, de blasons qui rayonnent, de marguerites de marbre qu'ils effeuillent dans leurs mains de marbre; et quand le vent fait gémir les portes ils murmurent entr'eux: 'Qu'avez-vous, mon âme, pour soupirer si haut?' Et quand la pluie creuse le toit sur leurs têtes ils se disent: 'Entendez-vous aussi sur votre dais la pluie de l'Éternel Amour?' "*

THE TOMB†

So rest, for ever rest, O princely pair,
In your high Church, 'mid the still mountain air,
Where horn, and hound, and vassals never come!
Only the blessèd Saints are smiling dumb
From the rich painted windows of the nave
On aisle, and transept, and your marble grave;
Where thou, young Prince, shalt never more arise
From the fringed mattress where thy Duchess lies,
On autumn mornings, when the bugle sounds,
And ride across the drawbridge with thy hounds
To hunt the boar in the crisp woods till eve!
And thou, O Princess, shalt no more receive,
Thou and thy ladies, in the hall of state,
The jaded hunters with their bloody freight,
Coming benighted to the castle gate!
So sleep, for ever sleep, O marble pair!
Or, if ye wake, let it be then, when fair
On the carved western front a flood of light
Streams from the setting sun, and colours bright
Prophets, transfigured Saints, and Martyrs brave,
In the vast western window of the nave;
And on the pavement round the tomb there glints
A chequer-work of glowing sapphire tints,
And amethyst, and ruby—then unclose
Your eyelids on the stone where ye repose,
And from your broidered pillows lift your heads,
And raise you on your cold white marble beds;

* "L'Église de Brou." Poème par M. G. de Moyria, précédé d'une Introduction par M. Edgar Quinet. Bourg, 1835.

† "The Church of Brou," Part III., by Matthew Arnold.

And looking down on the warm rosy tints
Which chequer, at your feet, the illumined flints,
Say: *What is this? We are in bliss—forgiven—*
Behold the pavement of the courts of Heaven!
Or let it be on autumn nights, when rain
Doth rustlingly above your heads complain
On the smooth leaden roof, and on the walls
Shedding her pensive light at intervals
The moon through the clerestory windows shines,
And the wind washes 'mid the mountain pines;
Then, gazing up through the dim pillars high,
The foliaged marble forest where ye lie:
Hush—ye will say—*it is eternity!*
This is the glimmering verge of Heaven, and these
The columns of the heavenly palaces.
And in the sweeping of the wind your ear
The passage of the Angels' wings will hear,
And on the lichen-crusted leads above
The rustle of the eternal rain of love.

PART III

LANGUEDOC AND TOULOUSE

CHAPTER XI

TOULOUSE AND THE ALBIGENSES

The mountains of the Cevennes detach themselves from the central plateau of France and run southwards for more than 300 miles, curving somewhat to the west in their course. This range, though it never attains any very great height, is a wild, desolate region that cuts into sharply defined portions the areas grouped in the seventeenth century under the name of Languedoc. Toulouse, the capital of Haut Languedoc; Montpellier, the capital of Bas Languedoc, are very different places. The Cevennes separate two climates, two vegetations, and two national types. The Languedoc that lies on the shores of the Mediterranean, and is bounded on its eastern side by the rapid and capricious waters of the Rhone, has little in common with the western districts that slope towards the valley of the Garonne. The spirit of administrative separateness, strong in Southern France, is fond of insisting on these differences, and is apt to resent the terms Haut Languedoc, Bas Languedoc, as the unimaginative device of a centralised Government far away. The appeal to Clovis and the unity of France leaves the meridional temperament cold. Few facts are more borne in upon the traveller in Southern France than the gulf that separates the Frenchman of the south from the Frenchman of the north. That difference has been stressed repeatedly in history. The Albigensian heresy, the wars of Religion, were each in turn assertions of intellectual independence as much as assertions of faith. The rumours abroad more than once during the Great War of the lack of enthusiasm in the national cause shown by the south, and even by southern regiments, can have caused no surprise to anyone familiar with the southern tradition. That tradition has all along been one of somewhat unwilling

acquiescence in the authority and discipline imposed from Paris. The encroachments of the French kings in their task of welding together a united nation were nowhere viewed with more jealousy or resisted at greater price of blood and tears than in Provence and Languedoc. The spirit lingers on to this day, and the critical faculty in a population deriving its ancestry from the acute races who peopled the Mediterranean basin in classical times is not blunted by the passing of years.

I have spoken elsewhere of Montpellier as one of the most attractive towns in France. Personally I do not feel able to apply any terms so flattering to the sister city on the western side of the Cevennes. Toulouse is a large town, one of the largest in France, and a considerable centre of industry and commerce. Yet, in spite of its size and importance, it is a morose place that turns an unsmiling face upon the tourist. Perhaps the town and I met for the first time in a bad mood, but I cannot rid my memory of interviews with sulky tradesmen, wholly disinclined to supply my modest wants, and the unique experience of dirty tram tickets proffered instead of change. Toulouse lies in the centre of a dusty plain, and there seems dust over everything and everyone, morally as well as actually. The Garonne is an imposing size at this stage of its journey, but the muddy waters of the stream flowing between flat banks do not inspire enthusiasm. The streets are badly paved with rough cobbles, the side walks have a modicum of pavement. Toulouse contains great treasures, and, in St. Sernin, the finest extant Romanesque church built in brick. But these treasures are never obvious, and it is difficult for the foreigner to get any information about them locally. The tourist is not in evidence, and the town does not lay itself out to smooth his path. Guide books, even the familiar picture postcard, may be sought in vain. Unless you know beforehand what you want to see, and are prepared to hunt things up for yourself, no one will set you on your way. Towns, like people, have their own atmosphere, and Toulouse can hardly be blamed if she seems unable to throw off the burthens and memories of the past. Once

the centre of a great and brilliant civilisation, no city has suffered more from religious strife. The Albigensians in the twelfth century, the Calvinists in the sixteenth, held their views at the price of death and torture. Thousands of Protestants perished in the sixteenth century, and the losses of the Albigensians were on a scale that involved practical extermination for a large section of the population. Toulouse has been drenched in blood throughout the ages, and the spectre of persecution still seems to haunt its dusty streets. It is an unexpected and pleasant surprise to come face to face in this neighbourhood with the clean and upright personality of the Duke of Wellington. Most people have forgotten—if they ever in fact knew—that the last battle of the Peninsular War was fought before the walls of Toulouse. Soult was outmanœuvred and forced into surrender by the English general in 1814, some days after the abdication of Napoleon.

Yet, in spite of this discouraging exterior, I must impress on every lover of the Romanesque on no account to omit a visit to Toulouse. To do so would be to miss an essential page in the history of mediæval art and culture.

It is rather difficult to realise that this dusty town, so indifferent to the relics of its own grandeur, was once the famous and brilliant capital of the Counts of Toulouse. This great family, long before the days of the Medici, like them were patrons of art and literature. A thousand years have passed since the court of the counts of Toulouse became famous throughout Europe for its wealth and learning. And here the Langue d'Oc was brought to its highest point of perfection, "une langue amollie par les Grecs, brillantée par les Arabes des chants d'amour et de guerre si doux qu'ils semblaient être composés par un peuple de femmes." Toulouse, the ancient Tolosa, was the capital of a Celtic tribe before it became the centre of a Roman province. After the fall of the Empire the Visigoths made it their chief city. Early in the sixth century it was captured by Clovis, and under its Frankish rulers was sufficiently powerful or sufficiently diplomatic to resist the wave of Saracenic invasion that threatened to submerge Western Europe. The independent counts of

Toulouse rose into power during the period of confusion that followed the break-up of Charlemagne's Empire. "Neuf royaumes furent taillés dans cet Empire, neuf rois se trouvèrent à l'aise où Charlemagne manquait d'air."

This chaos served the turn of the counts of Toulouse. First tributary to the kings of France, they were soon in a position to shake off all control and to make alliances as between equals with the Capetian kings. The marriage of Constance of Toulouse in 998 with King Robert of France was not a happy venture matrimonially, but the story as told by the writers of the period throws into sharp relief some of the fundamental differences of temperament dividing the north and the south. Constance, child of a luxurious and cultured court, brought with her to Paris a new language as well as new dresses and new ideas. The troubadours who came with her were famous throughout the south of France, but their elegance and easy morals shocked the men of the north. Paris in Capetian times had yet to earn that reputation for immorality that haunts and excites the mind of the untravelled Englishman. In the eleventh century it was an austere place dominated by the practice of an exacting religion. King Robert himself was more of a monk than a monarch, and much of his time was spent in hymn-singing. It is easy to picture the dismay that must have filled the pious court on the arrival of the southern queen, attended by her minstrels, ladies, and courtiers. Raoul Glaber, dipping his pen in acid, complains bitterly of the corrupting influence of the newcomers on the "modest" mind of Paris. Their short hair, their absence of beard, their "chaussures indécentes" (apparently boots with the long point bent back) moved him to special wrath. Their armour, their clothes, their hair, all this was to him an expression of their essential levity of mind, and a morality no less loose. "Constance was the scourge of the good king," writes one monkish chronicler pathetically, and it has been suggested that the violent hostility shown to Albigensians two centuries later by the north derived some measure of its strength from the prejudice and dislike that took root at this moment.

In the heyday of their strength the counts of Toulouse

might well afford to smile at these vagaries and prejudices of the barbarians in the north, among whom a daughter of Toulouse found herself unhappily exiled. The Pagan spirit always latent in the south was strong in Languedoc, and relations with Saracenic neighbours across the Pyrenees were far from unfriendly. The splendour and culture of the Moorish court at Cordoba must have struck a responsive chord in the hearts of the counts of Toulouse, and there is little question that in matters of art as well as of trade there was a constant exchange of amenities between the Moors and the Christians. Cordoba and Toulouse, under their respective rulers, were centres of light and learning, and the fanaticisms that disfigured the rival faiths when roused were mercifully allowed to slumber.

A good deal remains to be learnt of the influence, in the best sense of the term, that the Saracens exercised over the art and culture of Western Europe, and it is clear that Toulouse would figure largely in any such enquiry. But Languedoc, if tolerant in outlook, was a Christian province, and when the day of the Crusades arrived felt the reaction of the West against the East no less than its neighbours. Count Raymond of Toulouse took the Cross and went on Crusade. Under Raymond II. the counts of Toulouse were at the height of their power and fame, and no writing on the wall foretold that the moment of eclipse was at hand. Religious strife is of all solvents the most disastrous, and the Albigensian persecution led to the downfall of the Raymonds. I must deal with that struggle here, for its reactions in many directions, and especially on the art and culture of Southern France, were profound.

The Albigensian heresy is an obscure and difficult page of history, largely because our knowledge of it is almost entirely derived from the records and literature of its opponents. Triumphant orthodoxy did not scruple to add slander to persecution, and loaded its enemies with a weight of moral turpitude for which there is no evidence. Albigenses is the term usually applied to the Catharist heretics who first appeared in France early in the eleventh century. The name is a misnomer, for though numerous round Albi, the real centre of Albigensian influence lay in

Toulouse. Much obscurity hangs over the origin of this sect, but we know that the doctrines they preached came from the East. The contact of Christianity with the Oriental mind gave rise to many heresies, and Gnostics, Manichæans, Paulicians, Bogomils, all professed doctrines akin to those of the Albigenses. These latter may be regarded as Neo-Manichæans, for like the Manichæans they were dualists, believing in two co-existing principles—one of good, one of evil. There is reason to think that this doctrine reached France from Bulgaria via Italy. However introduced, it fell on favourable soil in Languedoc, where it flourished exceedingly. The Albigenses formed a powerful anti-sacerdotal party in opposition to the Catholic Church, whose corruptions they never ceased to denounce. It is an error, and a careless error, to speak of them as forerunners of Protestantism. With the principles of Protestantism they had nothing in common. The Albigensian creed was not only austere, but entirely hostile to the principles of an ordered society. It was rooted in a conception of life as fundamentally evil in itself. Satan is Lord of the World, and there is no Purgatory or Hell save the world in which we dwell. Created by the fall of the angels from Heaven, this visible world is the antithesis of Christ's Kingdom of Peace and Love. The principle of evil created the human body and all ordinary natural phenomena. It is equally responsible for all extraordinary phenomena such as wars and earthquakes. The human body is sinful: consequently the Redeemer never assumed such a body. He was only apparently born and apparently crucified. The extinction of bodily life was the aim of the true believer. The Albigensian by the graveside of a loved one could indeed give thanks for the delivery of the soul from the bondage of the flesh more wholeheartedly than is possible to the Christian mourner. The liberation of the soul from the captivity of the body was a desired end, so that the believer could be at home with the Lord and absent from the flesh, for which there is no place in Heaven.

This curious doctrine led to some startling practices in the conduct of daily life. Since matter was essentially evil

and the human body essentially sinful, marriage as an institution was condemned root and branch. Abstention from all animal food, even milk and eggs, was prescribed, for generation and the fruits of generation in all its forms was an accursed thing. Suicide, on the other hand, was exalted, property condemned, and civil obligations regarded as of no importance.

Now if doctrines implying the final extinction of human society are to be carried out at all, they at once demand an outer and an inner ring among their adherents. And this in fact is what we find among the Albigenses. The sect was divided into two portions of very uneven size: on the one hand, a few ascetics known as Perfecti or Parfaits who had undergone initiation, and on the other the great mass of believers known as Credentes or Croyants. The central Catharist rite was the ceremony of initiation known as Consolamentum or baptism with fire and water. The Perfecti—both men and women—who had undergone this initiation observed a rigid rule, but the Credentes lived ordinary lives and were free from moral prohibition until they received the Consolamentum on their deathbeds. The Croyants were to cultivate a spirit of self-detachment from the affairs of the world. The Consolamentum administered *in extremis* would cleanse their bodies from sin and make them fit for the eternal bliss of the Heavenly Kingdom. It was important, I might add, for the ordinary believer not to receive the Consolamentum when there was any hope of recovery, for the invalid would return to health weighted by the obligations of the code imposed on the Parfait. For those who wished to dedicate themselves to this service, a rigorous discipline was enforced prior to initiation. All adherents kept three Lents in the year and fasted three days a week. The Catharists held a simple Eucharist that in some respects recalls the Communion service of the Presbyterian Church. When the worshippers had met together the eldest person present broke the bread and gave it to the assembled men and women with the words, "Thanks be to the God of our Jesus Christ. May the Spirit be with us all." The Catharists held that bread so partaken was blessed but

not converted into the body of Christ. There was no hierarchy and no regular priesthood, but the Parfait occupied a position comparable with that of a bishop. To the doctrines of the Catholic Church they showed uncompromising hostility. They rejected the Mass, the Virgin Birth, Baptism, Absolution, and Purgatory. Prayers to the saints were also condemned, and the necessity for consecrated places of worship. As an outraged Catholic writer observes with some justice, " Ce n'était retrancher de la religion chrétienne que le dogme, la foi, la poésie, et les arts." It is hardly surprising that, faced by such a challenge, the Papacy girt up its loins and made ready for battle.

Our perplexity takes another form today.

How are we to explain the astonishing success of the Catharist doctrine in Southern France and the protection afforded to the sect by wealthy pleasure-loving nobles like the counts of Toulouse ? For it was thanks to the special favour shown by Count Roger II. that Toulouse became the stronghold of the Albigenses. The meridional temperament is keen, quick-witted, and emotional. The Pagan sense of beauty and the Pagan love of life persisted in spite of all changes of rulers and faith. What possible tie could exist between the supporters of an anarchical creed and a population whose hold on the good things of this world was nothing if not realist ? The land of the troubadours renowned for wine, women, and song, the country of the *gai savoir* and courts of love, a ruling house whose luxury was the envy of ruder princes—could any antithesis appear more absolute than the outlook on life of the lords and ladies of Toulouse and the grim tenets of the Parfaits and the Croyants ? Again, we do not know the story from the Albigensian side, and their enemies no doubt exaggerated grossly in the day of persecution. There is no evidence of the dark moral practices of which the Catharists are accused. On the contrary, we gather that they were people of blameless lives—*les bons hommes*, they were called. But the riddle of their popularity in surroundings apparently so incongruous is one I cannot pretend to solve. Antagonism to the King

of France, to a Paris reputed pious, probably influenced the general attitude of the population.

Heresy was no new thing in Languedoc, for the Goths had been Arians, and they had ruled in Toulouse. The Catholic clergy in Languedoc were admittedly corrupt and their lives unedifying. Innocent III. has left on record a scathing indictment of their greed, immorality, and unseemly conduct. A clergy notoriously lax makes for the worst form of cynicism in an indifferent population, and the laxity was flung into still higher relief by the austere lives of the Parfaits. Be the reasons what they may, Catholicism waned as Catharism grew in strength. By 1165 they were strong enough to compel the Catholic clergy to a public disputation in which the orthodox side had much the worst of it. In 1167 the Albigenses held a General Council at Toulouse, and treated the cardinal legate with derision and contempt. The whole situation caused great and growing anxiety to the authorities at Rome, but until the accession to the Papal Throne of Innocent III. in 1198, no pope had had the courage to grasp the Albigensian nettle. Innocent III. was a man of tougher fibre, and set on foot active measures for the suppression of the heresy.

The standard raised by the new pope proved a rallying-point for men more violent and fanatical than himself. Folquet of Marseilles was a troubadour of some eminence who, wearying of love and ladies, had turned monk. The violence of the convert is notorious, and when appointed Archbishop of Toulouse in 1205 he proved himself to be the pope's right hand. The first step was to bring pressure to bear on the counts of Toulouse, under whose protection the heresy had waxed fat. The Raymonds, a gifted race artistically, were not astute as statesmen. Raymond VI. proved himself to be no man to ride a storm. His hesitations and vacillations contributed largely to the final disaster. For a time he turned a deaf ear to papal clamour, but under pressure finally consented to banish the sect. The promise given, he took no steps to fulfil it, despite papal remonstrances. Over 1,000 towns were by this time "infected with the heresy," and Innocent III.,

anxious and exasperated, determined on sterner measures. In 1201 three legates had been sent by him to bring the Catharists to reason, and their mission marks an important stage in the struggle. For it brought on the scene a monk at once able and fanatical in the person of St. Dominic, who flung himself heart and soul into the task of blotting out heresy and heretics alike.

In 1207 Innocent took a step fraught with tragic consequences for the brilliant civilisation of Languedoc. He proclaimed a Crusade, and called upon the King of France to lead it against the Count of Toulouse and the schismatics of the south. The King of France in reply played a waiting game of vast advantage ultimately to the Crown. But the greedy nobles of the north, presented with the chance of pillage and plunder in the south—pillage and plunder, be it said, decorously disguised as religious service —required no second invitation. They took the Cross with alacrity, and Simon de Montfort (his son plays a part later on in English history) became their leader. The campaign was conducted with the utmost ferocity. Peter of Castelnau, a papal legate, had been assassinated at St. Gilles in 1208, an event which had led to the excommunication of Raymond VI. Raymond bowed before the storm, made a humiliating submission in the very church where Peter of Castelnau had been done to death, and took the field against his own friends. But a weak man of no fixed purpose, he proved an unstable ally, and was again excommunicated in 1209 and proclaimed the enemy of the Church. Terrible massacres took place at Béziers and Carcassonne. Faced with persecution in its most cruel form, the Albigenses never faltered in their resistance. We can measure the hold of Catharic doctrines on the population by the tenacity of the resistance made.

The campaign dragged on for some years. Simon de Montfort carried fire and sword through the land, his braves sacking and slaying as they went. In this task he was ably seconded by St. Dominic, who spared no effort to fan the flames. It is clear that the pope watched with growing uneasiness the development of the struggle.

Innocent III. was a man of fine character, and in fairness to him it must be said that he viewed askance the sorry level to which the Crusade had sunk. It was no part of his plan that adventurers from Northern France, under the guise of a religious campaign, should despoil and dispossess the ancient ruling families of the south. Simon de Montfort was killed before the walls of Toulouse in 1218, but still the evil persisted, and whole companies of heretics who had recanted under pressure, lapsed once again into their old creed whenever the tide of battle swung on the Albigensian side. Further steps were necessary to extirpate the heresy.

Ordinary legal methods were useless. According to the legal procedure of the day, before a man could be tried in court an accuser had to come forward to charge him with the crime. The blameless life of the average Catharist made this procedure impossible, as crime and accuser alike were lacking. Different steps had to be taken for the conduct of a heresy hunt. Innocent III. hit on the ingenious device of an "enquirer," who should make an inquisition into the beliefs of a person suspected of heresy and take suitable disciplinary measures when necessary. In St. Dominic and his hounds—the black monks of the Dominican order—he found well-tempered instruments to whom this new task could be confided. The situation from the orthodox point of view was intolerable, and some way out had to be contrived. An "enquirer," no squeamish humanist priest, but a zealot with a stout stomach for dealing with refractory heretics, offered a welcome solution. And so emerges, born of persecution, cradled in blood and tears, the dread instrument of the Inquisition, whose shadow was to darken the religious life of Europe for centuries. Man has raised no greater monument to his own capacity to pervert the very essence of the religion he professes. The moral and intellectual bully is the most constant factor in history. The bully in possession of the machine of government ranks high among man-eating tigers, for spiritual capitulations are his special prey. When the power to persecute has not been broken by the growth of civil liberty, no cruelty, no atrocity has been too great

to compel the human mind to flow along canalised channels of thought agreeable to those in authority.

The Inquisition during the Middle Ages, the Cheka in Soviet Russia today, are both evil branches of this tree. The Fascist régime in Italy cannot be excluded from the same category.

The unfortunate Albigensians found themselves confronted by a foe armed with new and terrible weapons. St. Dominic and his followers flung themselves with ardour into their task. Persecution, with its path freed from any legal obstacle, was pursued more ruthlessly than before. Yet the long agony of the Albigensians dragged on for some years, until the remnant was hunted down and exterminated.

Simon de Montfort's son Almeric proved incapable of holding the ill-gotten gains grasped by his brutal but masterful parent. Raymond VII. of Toulouse was less than the shadow of a great name. And far away in the north the King of France toiled and intrigued and manœuvred, drawing ever closer the web of his net over the distracted and bloodstained south. Philip Augustus and his son Louis VIII. thought in terms of policy, while the Inquisition and its agents thought in terms of heresy. The troubles of the south promoted the cause of territorial unity which the kings of France kept steadily in view. When the exhausted and ruined province appealed finally to the King of France for protection, Languedoc fell like a ripe pear into the lap of the victorious monarchy.

Obliterated the Albigensians might be, but they left their mark for all time on the Catholic Church. This struggle gave birth not only to the Inquisition but to the mendicant orders. The campaign carried on by the Catharists against the immorality of the clergy led to the rigorous enforcement of celibacy. The Sacrament of Extreme Unction was evolved as a reply to the Consolamentum, and the Catharist indictment of the rapacious tribal god of the Hebrews compelled the prohibition of the Old Testament among laymen.

This melancholy story has a direct bearing on the art of the twelfth century. In no part of France did the flame

of the new culture burn more brightly than at Toulouse. A school of sculpture radiated from this centre which has left us many proofs of its genius. The tympana of Moissac, Beaulieu, Cahors; the churches and such fragments as remain in Toulouse itself, make it clear that here was a noble art that flowered in forms of supreme beauty. Any further development was cut short by the Albigensian Crusade. In hunting down Catharist heresy, the Church stamped out more than an eccentric faith. It destroyed a culture that would have enriched and dignified the sum total of human life and experience. Let us refrain from judging these people as monsters. Ecclesiastical authority acted according to the standards and principles of its own time. Is it not salutary to ask ourselves whether actions in which we have all shared, and standards we have all upheld, may not be condemned by a future generation as mercilessly as we condemn the shortcomings of our forefathers ?

No account of Toulouse would be complete without some mention of the troubadours and jongleurs. Much glamour clings round the name of these romantic figures who played a large part in the revival of poetry. It was in Southern France and Spain that the troubadours first came into prominence towards the end of the eleventh century. They were welcomed and encouraged by both the courts of Toulouse and the counts of Provence. The troubadours were lyric poets, and the name is derived from a Provençal word, "trobar," to find or to invent. They wrote and they sang in the Langue d'Oc, and invented and found out new forms for the verse they composed. These forms included the "sirventes," the "ballada," the "pastorella," a morning song known as the "alba," and an evening song called the "serena." The "plaint" was a dirge, the "tenson" a dialogue or dispute on the theme of love between the troubadour and his lady. Writers have held that some of these forms used in Provence are Semitic in origin, and were transmitted by the Arabs through Spain. The "tenson," for instance, has obvious kinship with the Arabian form of song known as the "contention"; the "plaint" with the Arab "complaint."

The troubadours, distinct from the jongleurs, were often men of high birth and of social eminence. Among them were twenty-three ruling princes. But though royal persons like Richard of England and Count Guilhem of Poitiers were proud to be known as troubadours, other men of good family followed the career professionally. They wandered from castle to castle singing the praise of noble ladies, and were received everywhere with honour and respect. The romantic and somewhat artificial atmosphere thus created about the women of the day was a new experience in a rude age. The treatment of women is a sure guide to the standards of civilisation in any given age, and women owe a debt to the troubadours for the exalted view of feminine worth which was a dominant theme in their poems. Platonic love has never soared higher than in these lyrics. For more often than not the lady addressed in such terms of abstract passion was a chaste matron, to whom homage was paid by the troubadour in a spirit as aloof as that in which Dante worshipped Beatrice. Now and again there was a scandal, and then the thin veil of decorum and romance was torn, and savage passion raised its naked head. There is a story, I hope apocryphal, told of Guilhem de Cabestauch, who made love to Seramonda, wife of the Count of Castel Roussillon. The husband killed him, cut out his heart, and had it delicately served for his wife's dinner. Seramonda, on hearing the truth, flung herself out of the window. So strong was the feeling excited against the count that he was slain by the neighbouring nobles. The lady and the troubadour were buried with great pomp at Perpignan. The cynic may remark that when a handsome and gifted man makes the praise of love his profession trouble is bound to follow. But in point of fact the lapse from the abstract to the particular among the troubadours happened much less frequently than we might expect. The troubadours included men of very different types. Browning, in a haunting poem, has recalled the love of Rudel, Prince of Blaye, for the Lady of Tripoli—the sun to whom his heart like a sunflower turned perpetually. But Rudel, though he went on Crusade, was a mystic, and some suspect

that the Lady of Tripoli of whom he sang in amorous terms was an image of the Church.

Made of different stuff was Bertram de Born, whom Dante describes in Hell carrying his severed head before him. Troubadours did not always confine themselves to poetry and song. Men of such reputation not infrequently played a part in the public affairs of the day. Bertram de Born was an active factor in the politics of the twelfth century. He became involved in the family life of Henry II. and his wife Eleanor, and stirred up no little trouble in that distracted household. But, like Rudel of Blaye, he too went on Crusade and made an edifying end. Bertram de Born's " plaint " on the death of Prince Henry of England is one of the most beautiful things in Provençal literature.

It was thanks to the first of the troubadours, Guilhem, Count of Poitiers and Duke of Aquitaine, that the tradition of high rank was established among his successors. Not for nothing was Eleanor of Aquitaine the granddaughter of such a man. His good looks, his levity, his courage, made him the hero of a hundred tales. " He knew how to sing and make verses, and for a long time roamed all through the land to deceive ladies," writes one contemporary. As was the fashion among men of the loosest life, he went on Crusade, and consoled himself for its disasters by verse-making and a scheme to found a religious house for the worship of Venus. Yet he too met the vision on the road to Damascus and ended his days in prayer and penitence. We shall hear of him again when we reach Poitiers.

The jongleurs were men of much lower standing than the troubadours. Very often a jongleur served a troubadour as an apprentice, and composed the music to which the lyrics of his master were sung. The jongleurs were professional musicians and reciters, not original poets. Sometimes, though very rarely, a jongleur rose to be a troubadour: such aspirations were watched by their superiors with a jealous eye. The jongleurs, though of humble birth, played their part in the revival of letters by popularising song and legend. In the early Middle Ages books had practically no existence. Monasteries

had manuscripts, but they did not circulate among laymen. Poetry, history, and romance could only reach even a limited public through the spoken word. All people, whatever their rank, who could write were classed during the eleventh and twelfth centuries as clerks—men who had studied and learnt Latin. Troubadours and jongleurs must have learnt the elements of the trade from the "clerks." The jongleurs knew how to recite and sing and tell a tale in the castle hall at night. The age was eager and astir. With his *chansons de geste*, his narratives, his songs, the wandering minstrel carried in his wallet new thoughts and ideas, which were to fly like winged seeds and quicken the awakening life of Europe.

Altogether there were recognised about 400 noble troubadours from Guilhem of Poitiers down to Guiraut Riquier of Narbonne, known as the last of the troubadours. Poetry, like sculpture, perished in the Albigensian war. As darkness fell on the great families of Southern France who patronised the arts, ruin overtook the troubadours. Many wandered into Italy and Spain, telling anew in a strange land tales of the worth and generosity of the good counts of Toulouse. Others remained, but refused to sing songs for the conquerors. Culture cannot flower under the shadow of persecution, and song passed away amid the sobs of a tortured people.

Were there ever Courts of Love? Their existence has been affirmed and denied, but the balance of evidence is in their favour. It is pleasant to think that these engaging tribunals were held, and that beautiful women gave judgment on some subtle question of love arising out of the "tensons." Eleanor of Aquitaine, who carried on the tradition of her grandfather, encouraged poetry and welcomed troubadours at her court. She is said to have presided over a Court of Love that tried many *causes célèbres*. Somewhat precious all this may seem, but at least splitting straws in Courts of Love was a more innocent way of passing the time than fire, sword, and rapine.

In the fourteenth century there was a revival of poetry and letters in Toulouse, and the Academy of the Jeux

Floraux was founded to promote *le gai savoir*. All Languedoc poets were summoned to a competition for which the prize offered was a gold violet. Subsequently two more flowers were added as prizes—the eglantine and the marigold. The competition known as the Jeux d'Amour took place in May, and it still persists every year in Toulouse under the title of the Jeux Floraux. The name of Clémence Isaure is always associated with the Jeux Floraux at Toulouse as a munificent patron and benefactress. But the higher criticism has dealt harshly with the poor lady and now denies her existence. The Académie des Jeux Floraux is housed in a beautiful Renaissance building, the Hôtel d'Assézat, built by Bachelier for a wealthy citizen of Toulouse. Jeux Floraux is the oldest literary society in Europe, and where so much has been swept away let us be grateful for this link with the poetry of the troubadours and the song of the jongleurs.

CHAPTER XII

TOULOUSE SCULPTURE

Toulouse, a city of the plain, lying in a river bed, has no good quarries near at hand. The sort of material available always determines building, and the Languedoc architects had in the main to rely on brick both for houses and churches. All travellers to Northern Italy will remember how fine a medium brick becomes in the hand of a cunning craftsman. Toulouse, no less than the cities of Lombardy, knew how to treat brick like a gentleman, and to reap a tenfold reward for their confidence. The brick church of St. Sernin is one of the noblest in Europe. St. Sernin disputes with Vézelay the claim to be the longest extant church in France since the destruction of Cluny. But there all resemblance ends. Vézelay is broad, spacious, and full of sunshine; St. Sernin is lofty, narrow in proportion to its length, and dimly lit. No two churches are more unlike without and within. St. Sernin sits squarely on its open *place* as an English cathedral sits on its close. You can walk round it and see it without obstruction from every side—an advantage rare in France. Many Romanesque churches have simple exteriors that give no hint of the treasures they contain. But the outside of St. Sernin is extraordinarily fine. I know no church where such an impression of audacity is combined with perfect beauty and restraint. The *chevet* consists of no less than nine apsidioles, five radiating from the apse, and two carried on each arm of the transept. Walls and roofs are grouped together by a master hand. Each part as it rises higher carries the eye upwards in lines of unbroken harmony. First come the apsidioles—the outer jewels of the ring—then the round of the apse rising above them, then the circular wall of the choir with its elegant pilasters, finally

the massive wings of the transept with a straight roof line that binds together into one great whole the circular chapels and walls below. All this is only the base, grandly conceived, from which springs the splendid octagonal tower with its five tiers of arcades crowned by a small spire. No less beautiful is the colour. On a sunny spring morning the brick is flushed with all the tints of dawn, and the darker tiles of the roof stand out in admirable contrast. St. Sernin is a vast pile, but you never stop to ask yourself whether it is large or small. It is wholly satisfying in proportion and design, and from the outside is the finest Romanesque church in existence.

Of the interior it is not easy to speak in terms so unqualified. The work of the mediæval architect has been obliterated by Viollet le Duc's ill-conceived restoration, over which a later generation of architects has shed many tears. It is a sad fate for any old building to have its walls and pillars covered with plaster and the plaster then scratched with lines to represent masonry. No one can visit St. Sernin without feeling that Viollet le Duc has come within measurable distance of the crimes committed by Abadie at Angoulême, St. Front, and elsewhere. The concrete is there, and with the concrete that unhappy obliteration which comes to an old building when it is scraped and cleaned and shaken till the soul within it is done to death. Within St. Sernin there is nothing for it but to turn a blind eye on the sham stones and concentrate on the proportions of the building. Mercifully Viollet le Duc interfered very little with the sculptures.

St. Sernin is 115 metres long and has a nave and double aisles. It is a long and very lofty church and is entered by a small narthex. The nave consists of eleven bays resting on cruciform piers and is covered by a barrel vault. The piers have no capitals, but from the face of each pier springs a pillar which rises above the level of the triforium and carries a transverse arch. The triforium opens by two arcades into the nave, and is roofed in quarter circle so as to buttress the barrel vault of the central aisle. The transept is of great width, so wide in fact that it has the rare feature of side aisles. Beyond

is the choir and the beautiful *chevet* with its radiating chapels.

This great church, designed on such masterly lines, is one of the oldest in France. We are reminded that its choir is older than the First Crusade—older than the Chanson de Roland; that the Cid was living when the sanctuary columns were erected. It is with a sigh of astonishment that we look at these things and realise their great antiquity. We talk of the Dark Ages, but unless tradition and knowledge had survived in very definite form, how could the technical difficulties of building such a church have been surmounted by the end of the eleventh century? The reputed burial-place of St. Sernin was held in much reverence by the people of Toulouse, and previous churches had existed on the site of the present cathedral that go back to the early days of Christianity.

This noble church in its type and general plan does not stand alone. St. Sernin at Toulouse, Notre Dame du Port at Clermont Ferrand, Ste. Foy at Conques, St. Sauveur de Figeac, and St. James at Compostela are all members of the same family. So too was St. Martial at Limoges, unhappily destroyed. These churches are all built on the same general plan—a nave with a barrel vault, side aisles with groined vaults surmounted by a triforium or gallery roofed in quarter vault (an excellent device for propping the main vault), a wide transept with a tower at the crossing, and a spacious choir with side aisles and radiating chapels. Churches built on this plan are often called Auvergnat because the type is common in Auvergne. But the type itself is found far beyond the limits of that province. The famous churches mentioned above are all found on the pilgrimage routes, and in the opinion of Monsieur Mâle we must seek their prototype in the church of St. Martin at Tours.*

The Revolution dealt no harder blow to archæology than the destruction of this celebrated building. St. Martin had an extraordinary hold on popular imagination. A hundred legends are told of the great missionary who was the leading figure in the evangelisation of Gaul. The

* Mâle, "L'Art Religieux du 12ème Siècle," p. 298.

church raised to his memory was for centuries the religious centre of France. Like other famous churches, it was frequently enlarged and beautified. Though but a fragment remains today, excavations on the one hand, and contemporary descriptions on the other, help us to form a fairly clear idea of its design and proportions. The church of St. Martin (replacing an older one) was built between 997 and 1014, and the question arises whether we must seek on the Loire for the prototype of St. Sernin and other churches with a flowering *chevet* and side aisles with galleries propping the main nave. Broken though the chain, the scattered links remain. We would give much to know how once they were welded together.

The personality of St. Sernin himself barely emerges from the mists of legend. He was apparently a very early saint of the third century, who made himself objectionable to the Romans and was duly martyred. His disciples—St. Exupère, the first Bishop of Toulouse, and St. Sylve—are also vague figures who flit across the scene. In course of time the church of St. Sylve and St. Exupère was built in honour of the saint and his followers. This was replaced early in Carolingian times by a new church roofed with wood, and the name was changed to St. Sernin. At the end of the tenth century the church was handsomely endowed by pious benefactors, and a new building scheme was set on foot. So anxious was the Bishop of Toulouse, Pierre Roger, to carry out this design in worthy fashion, that he proposed to expropriate for this purpose all the offerings brought to the canons of St. Sernin. Needless to say, the monks objected strongly to this plan, and the quarrel hung up the reconstruction. This was not begun till about 1080, when Raymond Gayard, a canon of the abbey, emerges as the architect of the great church we know today. He remained in charge of the work till his death in 1118. It is very seldom that we know so much about the building of a church as we do at St. Sernin, or that the inspiration and influence of one man can be so clearly traced.

During the many years he was in control of St. Sernin, Raymond Gayard was able to give practical expression to

his ideas. To him we owe the general plan of the church as it is today, and the superb *chevet* was built under his direction. Work began as usual at the east end, and in 1096 the apse and the transepts were consecrated by Urban II. during his visit to Toulouse. The Corinthian columns of the ambulatory date from this early period. Gayard built the nave from end to end, and finished it at the point where the narthex, added about 1160, now stands. But the church was not carried to its full height by Gayard, and the upper galleries of the triforium were added at a later date. The sculptures in the triforium are very superior in quality to the more primitive work below. The upper galleries are reached by a very long and dark and winding little staircase, and the sacristan has to be coaxed to take you up. But once the climb achieved, the capitals well repay the effort. They are sculptured with great skill and vigour, and both in theme and execution have much in common with the capitals at Moissac. Birds and animals in many fantastic forms occupy a large place in the sculpture of the south. Winged eagles, archers, birds in wreaths of foliage pecking each other, goats pursued by wolves, vigorous quadrupeds with two bodies and one head, appear both at St. Sernin and Moissac. Here, too, I found a capital of dragons devouring the head of a sinner almost identical with one in the crypt of St. Bénigne at Dijon. The same design appears on a more archaic capital which decorates the Porte des Comtes, the entrance on the south side to the transept. A ferocious-looking eagle on an adjoining capital in the triforium also recalled a similar eagle at St. Bénigne. Some capitals of an earlier church were adapted to use in the triforium—perhaps a question of sentiment, perhaps to save expense. Worshippers were not admitted to these upper galleries, and the care lavished on capitals that could rarely have been seen is an instance of the admirable spirit of detachment in which the sculptors of the time worked. The beautifying of the House of God was an end in itself, not an end made dependent on the presence or absence of worshippers.

To return to the building of St. Sernin—Raymond

Gayard, as we saw, completed the east end and built the nave up to the level of the triforium. About 1160 the church was further enlarged by the addition of the present west end front, the narthex, and the towers. The triforium was probably finished about the same date. The sculptures of the door suffered considerably during the Revolution when some bas reliefs of St. Sernin were destroyed. Though some capitals with fine interlaced animals survive, the portal cannot compare in interest with the south door. Here we have an early but interesting tympanum of the Ascension. As a composition it has not wholly shaken off the archaic stage. The artist was clearly at a loss how to suggest the upward movement. His Christ is barely raised off the ground. On the lintel the Apostles are gathered round the Virgin, and raise their arms with gestures of surprise. The figures have begun to stir, but lack the swing and freedom of the later work. Two fine Apostles of later and more finished workmanship flank the door to right and left. An attractive Renaissance *avant-porte* leads into the rue du Taur, a name that recalls the bull that gored St. Sernin to pieces. The work on the Porte des Comtes is still earlier and ruder. The Virtues and Vices appear on these capitals, among them the sinner described above with two monsters tearing his head to pieces. In a recess are sarcophagi that contained the bodies of the ruling house. Two of these go back to Gallo-Roman times.

In the ambulatory at St. Sernin are seven marble bas reliefs whose date and origin are uncertain. A massive but beardless Christ sits in a mandorla surrounded by symbols of the Apostles. To right and left are a cherub and a seraph, who carry a Greek cross at the end of a sceptre; then come two angels on one side and two Apostles on the other. The angels and Apostles are larger than the Christ and the cherubim. Clearly they do not fill the places for which they were designed, and when transplanted were not grouped with much skill. It is suggested that originally they formed part of the decoration of a door—possibly the west door of Raymond Gayard's nave. Perhaps, too, the sculptor sought inspiration from an ivory

carving. The bas reliefs differ in quality and character from the later Romanesque work in the church, but their origin remains a mystery.

The crypt of St. Sernin has a superabundance of relics, among them, surprisingly enough, the bones of a Saxon king, St. Edmund, given by Louis VIII. of France. Charlemagne, so it is stated, endowed the earlier church with large portions of the bodies of the Apostles and the entire bodies of eight saints. The counts of Toulouse brought back a large portion of the body of St. George from Palestine, and Count Alphonse Jourdain acquired at Compostela—by methods not specified—a substantial part of the remains of St. James. Little wonder that with such possessions St. Sernin ranked high among pilgrimage places. The claim to possess any portion of the bones of St. James was not at all to the taste of the monks of Compostela, who were quick to scent competition with their own celebrated shrine. St. Sernin was a halting-place on the road to Compostela, and pilgrims who had worshipped the relics of St. James at Toulouse, did not always find it necessary to continue their journey to the remote Spanish pilgrimage place. With relics so venerated we might look at St. Sernin for a treasure in silks and reliquaries of great antiquity and merit. Unfortunately, whatever possessions the church may have had in the past, little remains today save a celebrated textile of great magnificence.

The cloisters of St. Sernin were destroyed at the time of the Revolution, and those of La Daurade and St. Étienne suffered the same fate. Many fragments from the three places are preserved at the Museum. Architectural schools, as I have pointed out before, are very ill-defined in France, and none more so than the School of Languedoc. Archæologists have described its boundaries in wholly discrepant terms.

The churches of Languedoc approximate very closely, as we saw, to the type called Auvergnat—Languedoc did not evolve a special type of its own. But the special importance of the School of Toulouse must be sought in its sculpture, a field where it outstands. Here we can

best judge the power and originality of the artists whose influence struck far north and fertilised the great developments fostered by Suger. In statuary, in historiated capitals, in tympana, Toulouse was a formative influence in Romanesque art. The tympana can still be seen *in situ* at Moissac, Beaulieu, and Cahors. The statues and the historiated capitals must be sought in the Museum at Toulouse.

The Museum at Toulouse is charmingly housed. Few people apparently penetrate into it, and the cloister, with its shrubs and flowers, is a pleasant refuge from the hot and dusty streets outside.

This collection of twelfth-century sculpture is one of the most remarkable in France. Here are gathered together statues of Apostles and Biblical personages brought from St. Étienne and La Daurade, and a remarkable series of capitals from the same cloisters. The capitals from St. Sernin are rougher and less interesting than those from La Daurade and St. Étienne. But from St. Sernin comes the remarkable bas relief—clearly later in date—of two women with crossed legs, one holding a lion and the other a ram. This beautiful and animated work illustrates an old prophecy mentioned by St. Jerome. The two gracious women, with their touch of classic grace, prove that the sculptors of the time had drawn inspiration from the old while creating the new. Other fragments, too mutilated for recognition, leave us lamenting over the senseless destruction wrought. Enough is left of the bas relief of a draped woman to show that here was an art fully emerged into the light of power and freedom.

From the cloisters of St. Étienne come the remarkable series of Apostles with crossed legs, some of them signed by their author, Gilabertus. The cathedral as it is today is a strange-looking building with a Gothic nave and a Romanesque choir built on two different axes. No effort of any kind has been made to harmonise the discrepancies of construction, and the whole appearance of the church is extraordinarily lopsided. The cloisters were attached to the west end, and constituted the most venerable cemetery in Toulouse. Many ancient families were buried

there, and the burial-place, with its tombs, monuments, frescoes, historiated capitals, was a veritable Campo Santo filled with treasures. In 1794 it was dug up by speculators in search of saltpetre. In 1813 the inhabitants wanted a new street and clamoured for the demolition of the cloister. This was carried out in the ruthless fashion of the day, but Dumège, a Toulousan citizen, saved the statues of the Apostles, which decorated the portal of the chapter house, and some of the capitals. The Apostles from St. Étienne have a place apart in Romanesque sculpture. They consist of four groups of two Apostles and four single figures of Apostles all standing under arcades. The majority of the figures have their legs crossed, a special feature of Toulouse sculpture that calls for considerable skill in manœuvring folds of drapery. Of the dual figures the finest is that of St. Peter and St. Paul. Both Apostles have their legs crossed, their robes are richly embroidered, and each wears a jewelled nimbus. St. Peter holds the keys in his left hand and raises the right in blessing. St. Paul holds an open volume in his left hand. Of the single figures the finest are St. Andrew holding a book and St. Thomas a roll. These are the statues to which the sculptor, Gilabertus, has attached his signature, "Gilabertus vir non incertus me fecit"—a first-hand testimony to craftsmanship, rare though not unknown, among the Romanesque sculptures that have survived the vicissitudes of eight hundred years. These statues are lifelike and energetic. The hair is very elaborate, careful detailed work is shown in the finish and execution of the accessories. The feet are very large, and lend themselves to controversies of the type that raged over Epstein's Rima, a work of art akin to some sculpture of the twelfth century.

The Church of La Daurade stood on the site of a temple dedicated to Pallas in Roman days. It was destroyed in 1813 to make room for a tobacco factory. Eight antique columns, precious relics of an earlier building, were given to a gentleman in the neighbourhood and put up by him in his park. There they formed a summer-house called the Temple of Apollo. This building was swept away by an inundation in 1875 and the columns dis-

[*Archives Photographiques, Paris.*

TOULOUSE MUSEUM: CAPITAL OF BEAR HUNT (LA DAURADE).

[P. 206

appeared. The statues from the Daurade form an interesting collection, older in date and more timid and hesitating in workmanship than the Apostles from St. Étienne. They, too, decorated the portal of the cloister, and consist of numerous figures from both the Old and New Testaments. Some have the attributes of Apostles and prophets; King David is here, also the Virgin and Child. The Virgin is a type obviously studied from life, a genial countrywoman who, babe on knee, leans forward with a smile. Some of the Daurade statues approach very nearly to sculpture in the round, and though it is impossible to date them accurately, they show that an accomplished art was in being when the hand of religious strife fell on Toulouse. Various *ateliers* were at work in Toulouse during the twelfth century. The statues and the capitals in the Museum are not all the product of the same group, let alone the work of the same hand. The school has its well-defined features—a certain corporate inspiration is noticeable—but within those limits there are many degrees of skill. The iconography of the historiated capitals is extraordinarily rich and varied. No less beautiful are the semi-classical themes frequently used, syrens, centaurs, mythical personages, caught in a network of *rinceaux*. The foliated capitals and splendid wreaths of fruit and flowers again betray the persistence of classical ideas and models. These capitals produce an impression of great richness. Many of them are carried on elegant twin shafts; abacus and base often being carved as elaborately as the face. Some of these capitals are really alive. It is astonishing that subject-matter crowded with incident and figures can be grouped on a surface relatively so small, and that the artist working within such narrow limits can tell a tale so well.

Let us look first at the capitals from St. Étienne—though do not imagine for a moment, gentle reader, even if you are moved to buy the Museum catalogue, that you will find them all set out in consecutive order. It is all part of the play in Toulouse to waste a considerable amount of time running to earth the works of art you desire to study.

From 395 to 399 in the catalogue we have a series of

beautiful foliated capitals, with leaves, branches, palmettes, wreathed over face and abacus. Tigers and gryphons appear on one abacus.

Mediæval sculptors had obtained complete mastery over foliated capitals long before the figures on historiated capitals had emerged from a naïve state. But the School of Toulouse carried this form of decoration to its highest point of perfection, and in no part of France do we find equal skill shown in the grouping of mythical creatures in a network of foliage.

A remarkable twin capital (No. 391) tells the story of Mary of Egypt. Mary of Egypt, a courtesan of Alexandria, was moved by a whim to visit Jerusalem. The first scene on the capital shows an angel with a large sword forbidding the entrance of Mary to the church of the Holy Sepulchre, Jerusalem. Jerusalem is shown as a delightful Romanesque town, with pine-cone roofs on the houses. Mary, overcome by the rebuff, kneels before the Virgin and Child and dedicates herself to a life of poverty and penitence. An angel talks to her from Heaven and bids her find peace beyond the river Jordan. In the third scene Mary receives three pennies from a stranger and buys with them three loaves of bread. In the fourth scene she arrives at the Jordan and washes her long hair in the river. Here the sculptor has been embarrassed to treat the Jordan save as a stream falling from Heaven. Mary remains for many years in the desert expiating her sins, and finally meets the hermit Zozimus. In the last scene Zozimus buries the saint, and a lion digs her grave in the desert. When the story begins Mary is dressed like a great lady of the twelfth century—finery she discards subsequently for the humblest garb of penitence. The grave-digging activities of the lion can only provoke a smile. But all the same, it is a purposeful and kindly beast. Another twin column (No. 392) tells the tale of the Wise and Foolish Virgins—that popular theme often found, as we shall see, in the churches of the old Duchy of Aquitaine. Jesus, seated next the Bride, welcomes the five Wise Virgins, elegant ladies in richly embroidered robes, carrying not lamps, but sceptres of arum lilies. Each Virgin wears a

splendid jewelled nimbus, and more than one is represented with crossed legs. The poor Foolish Virgins are treated in much less elaborate fashion and are not nearly so handsomely dressed.

Perhaps the best of all the capitals from St. Étienne is the one dealing with the death of John the Baptist (No. 390). This twin capital is in a remarkable state of preservation. Like the Wise Virgins, all the people of the story wear beautiful clothes. Mediæval art has few touches more intimate than the tender gesture with which Herod takes Salome's chin in his hand. The other scenes of the tragedy are easily recognised; particularly striking is the management of the banquet. The base, unrelated I think to the capital, shows a king being shod by a slave; hunters, peacocks and other animals.

The capitals from the Daurade are more numerous, more varied, and, generally speaking, of finer execution than those from St. Étienne. The beautiful frieze or friezes, with affronted birds, *rosaces*, *rinceaux*, and foliage, must have filled some place in the cloister or chapter house. Unfortunately no description of the doomed area was made before its destruction, and we have no guide of any kind here or at St. Étienne as to the original position of the fragments that remain.

Varied influences met at Toulouse and can be traced in the sculptures. Cordoba, as we saw in the last chapter, was a neighbour, unofficially esteemed if not officially recognised. Arab ornament reached Southern France through Spain, and at the Museum in Toulouse, arabesques and classical designs meet in new and beautiful combinations. The counts of Toulouse were wealthy princes, and doubtless their palaces held collections of illuminated manuscripts, ivories, goldsmiths' work, and other treasures. Cultivated minds, either in court or cloister, were eager about such things. Yet alongside the joyous semi-pagan love of life runs a deeper note. Toulouse was the stronghold of the Albigenses as well as of the troubadours. Pagan love of beauty finds its challenge in an austere piety. These opposites exist side by side, and have left their mark on contemporary sculpture. The series of

capitals at La Daurade devoted to the Passion of Christ are among the most moving memorials of the twelfth century.

The Daurade monks, it is clear, turned no unfriendly eye, when decorating their cloister, on classical design and Pagan ornament. This element is well represented in the Museum by several splendid capitals with foliage and mythical birds and beasts. No. 478, a capital with lions caught in *rinceaux;* No. 479, a twin capital with birds back to back and interlaced necks; No. 481, twin capital with men and beasts struggling together for the fruit of an iris —all these are a delight to the eye. Still finer is the capital No. 404 with a bear hunt on one side and a syren and centaur on the other. Engravings of this particular syren and centaur are sometimes reproduced in architectural books on the twelfth century; justly so, for the capital is exquisite in design and workmanship. But for long I sought it vainly in the Museum at Toulouse, till I discovered that the side reputed famous is turned towards the wall. May the hint save the time of any reader of these lines who shares the same curiosity.

To me, one of the most attractive capitals in the Museum is No. 477—the Rivers of Paradise. Here as at Cluny and at Autun it is as though the theme had moved the sculptor to some special effort of imagination and grace. At Toulouse this twin capital has four nude youths at the angles, who hold urns of water shaped like cornucopias. Each seated figure rests a jewelled urn on his shoulder and pours out a stream of water on to the face of the twin capital. The crossing of the streams is extraordinarily effective, so too are the youths holding up their urns with easy grace. Twelve historiated capitals from the Daurade are devoted to the Story of the Passion. They will be distinguished without much difficulty from an earlier and cruder series, which includes a remarkable Daniel in the Lions' Den surrounded by stylised lions (No. 469), the Musicians of King David (No. 473), St. Michael weighing the souls (No. 476), and a spirited capital of ship's rowers, fish, waves, and monsters (No. 470). This earlier atelier was clearly in touch with Moissac. At Moissac we shall

find a capital of David in the Lions' Den almost identical with the Daurade example. Incidents from the Life of Christ are shown on some of these earlier capitals, but they are entirely eclipsed by the later series. The artists of the south were the first to elaborate the Story of the Passion—Burgundy itself did not work out the tragedy in such close detail. French Romanesque sculpture is so varied and so beautiful that the traveller is often tempted to think that the last example he has seen is the finest. But the historiated capitals in La Daurade are in a class apart. The series begins with the Washing of the Feet (No. 457), then come the Last Supper (No. 458) and the Agony in the Garden (No. 459). The next capital (No. 460), the Kiss of Judas, carried not on twin but on triple columns, is one of the most astonishing in existence. The soldiers with their torches and spears, the kiss of the treacherous disciple, the arrest, the flagellation, the scene with Pilate—we can almost hear the noise and shouting and confusion of the dread drama. No. 461 is a solemn and moving Descent from the Cross. The noise and tumult of the preceding capital give way here to an intensity of silent grief as the disciples receive the body of the Lord into their arms and place it in the tomb. No. 462 shows the Descent into Hell and the final liberation of Adam and Eve, No. 463 the Resurrection and the Holy Women at the Tomb. The Resurrection is conceived in the most literal terms, for we see the Lord, helped by two Apostles, stepping out of the stone coffin—a degree of realism greater than the Evangelists allowed themselves. No. 464 is the Apparition of Jesus to the Magdalene, and also shows the Apostles running to the Tomb. St. John's flight can only be described as headlong, and he is forced to check himself by hanging on to a column of the Tomb with one hand as he raises the other in a gesture of astonishment. No. 465, the Walk to Emmaus, is beautiful, but sadly mutilated. In No. 466 the sculptor has given wonderful expression to the incredulity and repentance of St. Thomas. No. 467, the Ascension, is one of the finest of the series. Again we have the sense of a crowd agitated, astounded, but filled this time with a great hope. In No. 468 the

Holy Spirit descends on the bowed and reverent heads of the Apostles. The genius of a great artist and the faith of a great Christian shine through this marvellous series of capitals—one of the greatest legacies we owe to the art of the twelfth century.

One final capital remains to be described—No. 483—the Story of Job. It is, in workmanship and execution, perhaps the finest of the Daurade collection. Also it is unique; at least, I know of nothing like it. It is a twin capital, covered with delicate *entrelacs* and arabesques exquisitely carved and then opened out to form six little medallions. In the first three medallions Satan is seen destroying Job's sons, cows, and sheep. In the fourth Job with his chin on his hand surveys his sorry comforters. In the fifth Job is consoled by an angel. In the sixth he is cured and restored to his friends. The originality of this capital, and its complete emancipation from received forms, shows how vital and original the art of Toulouse had become when the blight of religious strife fell on the south.

Many hours may be spent with profit in the Museum at Toulouse. I have only indicated some of its outstanding treasures. Of two more I must speak before bringing this chapter to a close. From the cathedral at Narbonne comes a white marble pillar with four bas reliefs representing the Virgin and Child, a crowned monarch, and two martyrs with palms. The Virgin wears a jewelled crown and sits on an embroidered cushion. She holds on her knee the Holy Child, amply draped, who grasps a book in one hand and raises the other in blessing. Angels cense the Mother and Child from the angle of the pillar. The magnificent figure of the king in his jewelled crown and richly embroidered robes is described in the catalogue as an enthroned Christ. But Monsieur de Lahondes* has pointed out that this interpretation is certainly incorrect. The king wears no nimbus, his feet are shod, he gives no blessing. The right hand carries a sceptre with a lotus flower, but the left hand is clasped on his breast. These details point not to a heavenly but an earthly monarch—possibly Charlemagne. St. Just and

* *Mémoirés de la Société Archéologique de Toulouse*, 1908.

[*Archives Photographiques, Paris.*

TOULOUSE MUSEUM: CAPITAL STORY OF JOB (LA DAURADE).

[P. 212

St. Pasteur, patrons of Narbonne Cathedral, are the martyrs who appear on the remaining faces of the pillar. This fine work belongs probably to the end of the twelfth century, but is still wholly Romanesque in feeling and execution.

I cannot say the same of the superb group of the Annunciation, No. 551. The figure of the angel—and few figures in all Christian art are more noble—has felt the breath of the new inspiration from the north. If in the beginning Languedoc gave to Île de France, Île de France in turn gave back to Languedoc. The robe of the angel falls in finely draped folds that follow the lines of the body. He holds a lily in one hand, and his feet trample on a dragon biting the tree of life. The wings form a background for the finely modelled head and sensitive face. Some angels of the Annunciation arrive with the rush of wind in their draperies. They are breathless with their message and their task. Not so this gracious and serene figure who, with a face alight, calls Mary to her great mission. I find it difficult to believe that the Virgin in this group comes from the same hand as the angel. The figure is older and more rigid. Mary stands as though petrified by the angel's words. One hand grasps the long cloak that covers her from head to foot. The other is raised in the traditional gesture of surprise. If the two figures belong to the same date, they are the work of different men, one following the traditions of the past, the other already at ease in the ideas of the thirteenth century. No group could bring home to us more forcibly the moment of change at hand.

CHAPTER XIII

MOISSAC

The road from Toulouse to Moissac lies across a dull and dusty plain, poorly cultivated, judged by the high standards of French agriculture. But after Castel Sarassin the foothills of the Central Plateau come into view, and the scenery gains in interest. Moissac stands at the junction of the Tarn and the Garonne, and in blossom time must be a pleasant place. Orchards and vineyards rise in fold upon fold from the river banks, and the little town suns itself under sheltering cliffs from the cold winds of the Causses. Among the beautiful and little known rivers that flow through Western France, few are more romantic than the Tarn. After a stormy youth, cradled in mountains, it emerges from the hills to be caught up by the Garonne in the embrace of a stream greater and more decorous than itself. Together they flow on till near the ocean they become involved in the tide of men's affairs at Bordeaux. Moissac is the first stage in the taming of the Tarn, and the Garonne deals gently here with its wilful partner. Country hotels are very rare in France, but at Moissac the Hôtel de Luxembourg fulfils that condition, and fulfils it admirably. Archæologists can take their ease at their inn while pondering the many problems presented by the famous portal of the abbey church.

Situated at the junction of two considerable rivers, Moissac, as we should expect, is a place of high antiquity. The Gauls had a settlement here before the arrival of the conquering Romans. Many remains of the later Roman Empire—coins, medals, sarcophagi—have come to light in the neighbourhood. The abbey goes back traditionally to Merovingian days. It claims Dagobert as its founder in the seventh century, and the patronage of Carolingian kings at a later date. Subsequently, it was befriended

by the counts of Toulouse, and through this ill-fated family was dragged into the miseries of the Albigensian Crusade. Though the abbey was then under Cluniac control, this tie did not save either town or monastery from the iron hand of Simon de Montfort. He captured Moissac after a long siege, and dealt ferociously with the inhabitants. Kings of England (who would have been much better employed at home) had a habit of sacking towns in Southern France, and Richard Cœur de Lion made a brief appearance at Moissac in this capacity. The religious persecutions of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries repeated themselves in the fifteenth and sixteenth, and the town suffered in the later as in the earlier wars of religion. Suppressed by the National Assembly at the time of the Revolution, the cloister was saved by the public spirit of an official who bought it for an old song and restored it subsequently to the municipality. Finally, during the nineteenth century the Monuments Historiques stepped in and saved the church from demolition by a railway company, to whom it was an undesirable obstacle in the path of a new line from Bordeaux to Cette.

The fame of Moissac rests on its porch and its cloister. Each presents an ensemble of sculpture of the first importance. But the church as a building has little to interest the traveller and need not detain us long. It has been built and rebuilt and built over again. An early church was destroyed by fire in 1042, and at that time we hear that the community was too poor to make good the calamity. But a great change was at hand in the fortunes of Moissac. In 1047 the monastery was affiliated to Cluny by no less a person than St. Odilon himself. Now began a new era of wealth and prosperity. For more than two hundred years Moissac, favoured by popes and kings, was one of the richest monastic houses in France. It is stated that at the height of its fame the community numbered a thousand monks and held property in eleven dioceses.

This great material prosperity and the close tie with Cluny explain the magnificence of the sculpture at Moissac, though the church itself was not built on a very large scale.

Durand, Bishop of Toulouse, was the first Cluniac Abbot of Moissac, and he began a new church which was consecrated in 1063. This eleventh-century church was of the same size as the present Gothic church, and consisted of a nave with narrow side aisles, an apse, and an ambulatory. The ugly square tower, still in existence, was added between 1130 and 1140 at the west end of the church, and it is suggested that the famous tympanum was erected over the west door about this date. Towards the end of the twelfth century the church was remodelled and covered with domes, traces of which still remain. The times were troubled, and it was desired apparently to strengthen and fortify the western tower. There is reason to think that the tympanum was moved during this reconstruction from its original place at the west end to its present position above the south door. In 1188 another violent fire raged through Moissac. The church and monastery suffered heavily from this catastrophe, but the Albigensian troubles had begun, and no further building was undertaken until Languedoc fell exhausted into the hand of Philip Augustus. The church and cloister were rebuilt by Abbot Bertrand de Montaigu between 1260 and 1293 and were again refashioned in the fifteenth century.

The present Gothic nave with four bays is quite without interest. But the south door opens into a fine narthex below the western tower with remarkable primitive ogival vaultings and vigorous capitals. Beasts and monsters with two bodies and one head placed at the angle of the capital appear constantly on the eight pillars of the narthex. Above on the first floor is the Salle des Capitaines, also impressive by reason of its vaulting.

To turn now to the cloister—the largest and most beautiful in France. Here again we have records of building and rebuilding, with the confusion and uncertainty attached to the doubtful dates of a remote epoch.

The cloister was begun apparently by Abbot Ansquitel, who ruled the abbey from 1085 to 1115. The only certain date we possess in this tangled history is an inscription on a pillar of the cloister stating that they were built in 1100. The slender columns and elegant pointed arches

[*Photo. Edit. Giraudon*

MOISSAC : TYMPANUM (VISION OF APOCALYPSE).

[P. 216

of the galleries are broken at the four corners, and in the middle of each side by heavy brick pillars faced with marble. These are carved with primitive bas reliefs representing the Apostles. We are on safe ground in attributing them to the time of Ansquitel. Greater uncertainty attaches to the date of the capitals. Probably we owe them to the Abbot Roger, who succeeded Ansquitel and ruled the abbey from 1115 to 1131. Some archæologists, however, consider that the capitals are later in date and belong to the second half of the twelfth century. When the cloister was refashioned between 1260 and 1293 during the Gothic period, Abbot Bertrand substituted pointed brick arcades for the earlier round ones, but happily replaced Abbot Roger's capitals in their original position. (Historiated capitals, it will be remembered, disappear in Gothic architecture.)

As to the age of the porch, archæologists are again divided. It is not all by the same hand. The narthex and the tympanum cannot be earlier than the first quarter of the twelfth century, and are probably somewhat later. Where all is surmise, I hazard the conjecture that the porch was begun by Abbot Ansquitel, and that the Abbot Roger, whose statue decorates a pillar at the entrance, inspired the tympanum, though it may have been finished after his death between 1130 and 1140.

My readers may ask a little wearily why this dull and detailed search after dates about a cloister and a porch. But, as I shall explain in a moment, every stone at Moissac counts in any attempt to trace the history and development of twelfth-century sculpture.

The porch at Moissac is one of the grandest examples of Romanesque art. It is impossible to exaggerate its influence on all that was to follow. " Le jour où ce tympan fut découvert aux yeux des hommes on peut dire que la statuaire monumentale entonne elle aussi une cantique nouvelle," writes Monsieur André Michel. " La sculpture à ses débuts a fait une œuvre dont la grandeur n'a pas été dépassée. L'art du moyen âge débute par le sublime," writes Monsieur Mâle. The porch is deeply recessed. The tympanum and its decorated side walls are framed by

an outer arch with a band of foliage outlined by two slim archivolts. These spring from slender shafts of the same size. Voussoirs and shafts, equally slender, frame the tympanum, a band of arabesques being placed between each moulding. The tympanum is a work of art at once splendid and sombre. A man of genius has traced for us here his conception of the vision of the Apocalypse as described by St. John in the fourth chapter of the Revelation.

No risen Christ in the whole of religious art is a judge more formidable, more awe-inspiring, than the Christ of Moissac. He sits, a crowned and bearded figure, on a throne set with jewelled stars.* An under robe falls in symmetrical pleats to His feet and is covered by a tunic with a rich border. Over this is worn a long cloak. One hand holds a book; the other is raised in a gesture of judgment rather than of blessing. Round the Christ are grouped the angel, the eagle, the ox, the lion of the Apocalyptic vision. Great though the skill of the mediæval *imagiers* in dealing with animal sculpture, no beasts of the twelfth century are more vivid and dramatic than these. They are flung back upon themselves, gazing in adoration, as every eye in this great ensemble gazes, on the enthroned Lord. To right and left of the beasts are two angels; draped elongated figures carrying scrolls. Both look towards the Christ with that special intensity of feeling so remarkable in this tympanum. The "sea of glass like unto crystal" is suggested by waved lines before the throne. On the lintel below are grouped the Elders, each, according to the vision of the Seer, with a crown, a musical instrument, and a golden vial "full of odours which are the prayers of the saints." As there was not space on the lintel for more than fourteen figures, the remaining ten Elders are disposed so as to fill up the blank spaces on each side of the tympanum. Again every head is turned

* Monsieur Michel speaks of an ivory formerly in the Spitzer collection, of which the head is treated after the fashion of the Moissac Christ. There are similarities of technique in the treatment of hair and face that cannot be accidental. But the Spitzer collection is dispersed, and I do not know what has become of the ivory in question (Michel, "Histoire de l'Art," vol. i., p. 219).

[*Photo. Edit Giraudon.*

MOISSAC : TRUMEAU (SIDE VIEW).

[P. 218

upwards to the Christ. Polychromy, of which a few traces have been found, must in former days have served to heighten and intensify the effect of this marvellous work.

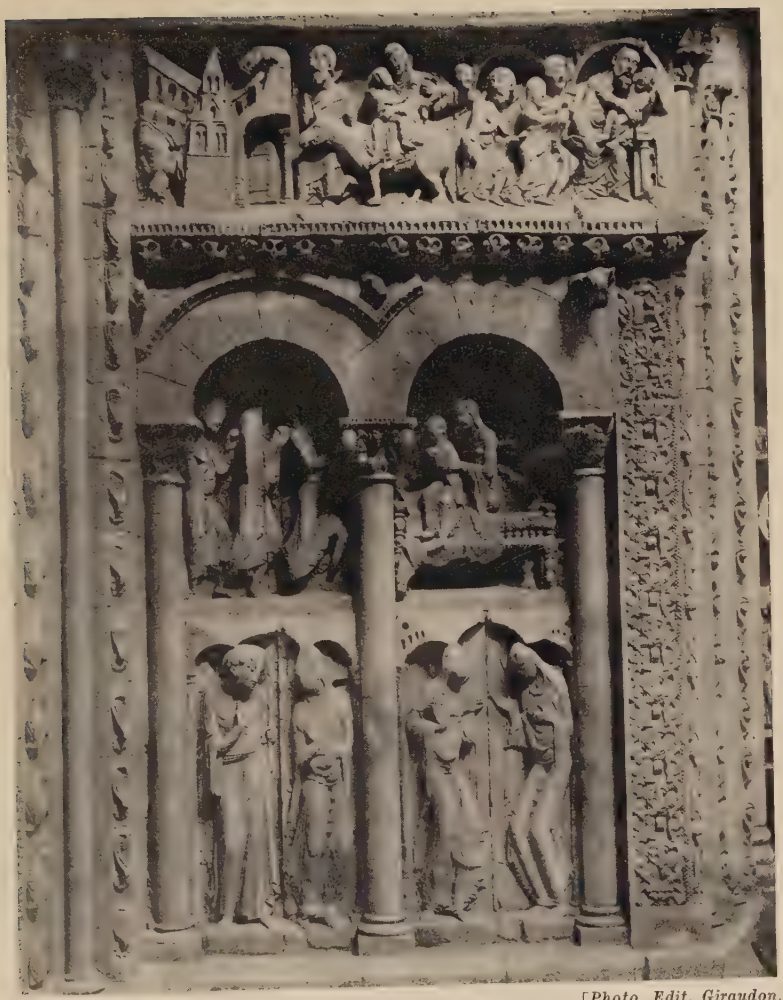
The unknown creator of this great work may have taken certain ideas from ivory figures and illuminated manuscripts. But in how novel and how puissant a spirit are these things re-expressed! This sense of breaking into fresh life sets the Moissac tympanum in a place apart. The figures have not wholly shaken off the old hieratic formulæ, but they have heard a new call in the corridors of time. The Dark Ages lie behind, and the Moissac Christ, majestic and remote, opens a fresh chapter in sculpture. The upper lintel of the Elders rests on a second one carved with magnificent *rosaces*. The three blocks of marble which compose this lintel clearly served some earlier purpose in a classical building. Gallo-Roman carving in low relief is visible on the sides. The blocks were put together in the twelfth century, and covered with their present celebrated design—a Romanesque adaptation of some Gallo-Roman motif. The lintel is supported in the middle by a splendid central shaft consisting of six interlaced lions and lionesses carved on a foundation of *rosaces*. Oriental influence is marked throughout Moissac, and this criss-cross of magnificent beasts has more than an echo of Sassanian goldsmiths' work or of ivory coffers made for the Khalifs of Cordoba. Figures of Apostles decorate the north and south sides of the pillar. One has crossed legs after the manner of the School of Toulouse. Though stiff and archaic, they express the same intensity of feeling as the other sculptures of the tympanum. This remark also applies to the figures of St. Peter and Isaiah which stand to right and left of the portal on jambs curiously carved in four half-circles.

The bas reliefs on the side walls which support the vault of the porch appear to be somewhat later in date than the tympanum. Possibly they were carved when the tympanum was moved from the west door to the south.

Each side wall holds six groups of sculpture. Four of these are arranged in a recess with two arcades and three columns; above comes a frieze divided literally into two

parts and separated from the recess below by a cornice carved with grotesques. Tales of the Nativity decorate the right-hand wall. To the left we have the parable of the rich man and Lazarus and other allegories. The lower groups are mutilated, but enough remains to point to an authorship no less sombre and more tormented than that of the tympanum. These violent and energetic figures lack the calm of the central group. The Moissac sculptor was not concerned to mince matters. The torments of the damned are nowhere more graphically depicted than in the scenes that he has devoted to the story of the rich man and Lazarus and the allegories of Avarice and Lust. We have met before the terrible image of the woman with breasts devoured by serpents. At Moissac she appears as a nude figure with a mocking demon at her side, serpents entwined round her body, and a toad at her feet. On her left is a figure of Avarice represented as a man carrying a devil on his back and a bag round his neck. He too is accompanied by a mocking demon, who points to a beggar leaning on a staff. In the compartment above the figure of Lust is a realistic scene of the death of the rich man. His escaping soul is seized by demons, one of whom shakes a purse before it. By the bed kneels a beautiful female figure in distress—too beautiful for such surroundings. To the left of this scene both the rich man and the woman appear in hell, suffering the extremity of torture. This panel is greatly mutilated, so we are spared some of the horrors of the underworld. On the frieze above the rich man and his wife are dining in comfortable prosperity to the right, while Lazarus dies at the gate. To the left Abraham, a solid bearded figure, nurses the soul of Lazarus (symbolised by a baby) in his lap. A prophet holds a scroll with the name of Lazarus inscribed among the blessed. The kinship between these two figures and the Elders of the lintel is obvious.

We turn from this terrifying composition to the charming scenes of the Nativity. Clearly another mind and another hand were at work here—a more cheerful spirit than the author of the tympanum and the sculptures of the left wall. In the recess under the arcades we have



[*Photo. Edit. Giraudon.*

MOISSAC: SIDE WALL OF PORCH.

the Annunciation and Visitation, and above a Virgin seated on the bed who received the adoration of three eager Magi. The frieze above is very curious. During the Presentation in the Temple Joseph is tapped on the shoulder by an angel who delivers the order, apparently most unwelcome, to fly into Egypt. Joseph's face of dismay and disgust at the news is one of the few touches of unconscious humour which enliven the portal—Abraham's energetic nursing of the baby is, I think, another. Very curious too is the scene of the Holy Family arriving at the gates of Heliopolis. Idols and demons hurl themselves head downwards from the ramparts at their approach. A very ancient iconography thus expressed a verse in Isaiah (xix. 1): "Behold the Lord rideth upon a swift cloud and shall come into Egypt, and the idols of Egypt shall be moved at His presence." This iconography has an echo of the Iconoclast period, and we meet it again at Moissac. It was an age of marvels and force, and sculpture reflected the ideas of the time. The angel in the Annunciation group has suffered from a preposterous reconstruction of his head. A little intelligent destruction here would be very helpful.

Majesty, strength, awe—these are the dominant notes of the south door at Moissac. The sterner side of the Christian faith has never been expressed in more uncompromising fashion. Very different is the impression made by the cloister. It is a scene of pure enchantment, as surprising as it is beautiful. Arcades and slender columns and historiated capitals open on to a garden with cedars and magnolias and flowering shrubs. Above the long vistas of delicate arcades—true magic casements—rise the tower and red roofs of the church.

This cloister—the largest and most perfect in France—is remarkable for unity of style throughout. Unlike the cloisters at Arles and Elne—its obvious rivals—it is all the work of the same period. Look closely at the capitals and their Christian iconography becomes apparent. But the first impression is something far removed from Christian piety. The breath of Spain—Arab Spain—has blown over Moissac. The marvellous arabesques, the fantastic

beasts, all the flora and fauna of the East are here. No ensemble is more rich or more fundamentally Pagan in spirit. Figure sculpture at its best you must not seek in this cloister. These beautiful galleries whisper of the "Arabian Nights" rather than of the monastic life. Some of the capitals covered with arabesques recall the art of Cordoba. Debased Cufic letters, surprising though it sounds, find their way now and again on an abacus, decorative motifs taken haphazard by the Romanesque sculptors without any real conception of their meaning. "Pour les sculpteurs romans les Pyrénées n'existent pas," says a French writer, and no place more than Moissac brings home the truth that Northern Spain and Southern France must be regarded as one artistic unit during the twelfth century.

The bas reliefs of the Apostles which decorate the eight square pillars of the cloister are curious rather than beautiful. Primitive and unsatisfactory as works of art, they have considerable value as signposts along the path. No contrast could be greater than that between the pillars and the capitals. The Apostles seem somewhat embarrassed and out of place among the fantastic animals and arabesques of the arcades. The famous Abbot Durand is represented on one of these bas reliefs. The figure is of interest, as some attempt at portraiture has clearly been made. Abbot Durand, so the tale runs, was not only a gossip, but a malicious gossip. St. Hugh of Cluny had occasion more than once to warn him that unless he mended his ways his mouth would swell after death, and grievous troubles overtake him in Purgatory. This prophecy was literally fulfilled after the abbot's death, so the legend ran, and the prayers and silence of many worthy monks were necessary to rescue him from the purgatorial pains consequent on his chattering habits. The thick eyes and the heavy chin of the abbot at Moissac preserve some echo of this curious tale. These bas reliefs are among the most ancient in France, and recall the sculptures in the ambulatory at St. Sernin in Toulouse. The name of Abbot Ansquitil and the year 1100 preserved on one of the pillars date them with exactness.

The historiated capitals of the cloister are somewhat later,

though they too were probably executed during the first thirty years of the twelfth century. The beautiful pointed arches were reconstructed, as we saw, by Bertrand de Montaigu at the end of the thirteenth century. Black, red, and white marble from the Pyrenees and a grey stone from Monteraux are used for the shafts of the columns. The capitals are carved in the limestone of the region; some are yellow, some are grey in tint. This blend of colour adds to the charm of the cloister, and gives it added warmth and quality. The capitals are very broad in proportion to the slender columns on which they rest. Each face is flattened out, and carries a deep abacus covered with the most varied designs and inscriptions. The face of the capital and the abacus are connected by scrolls, and sometimes by the wings of beasts and birds. The iconography is varied in the extreme, and covers a wide range of subjects, both in the Old and New Testaments. But very little room, thanks to the deep abacus and carving, is left on the capitals for groups of figures, and in the restricted space available the proportions are insignificant. It is not at Moissac we must look for historiated capitals equal to the Kiss of Judas at Toulouse, or the Rivers of Paradise at Autun, or the Seasons and Virtues at Cluny. Decoration, rather than figure sculpture, rules in this cloister. Scrolls and curves, beasts and birds, arabesques and Oriental designs drawn from many sources cover the capitals, and are carried out with extraordinary force and skill. It is borne in upon us here, as we compare the infantile groups on some capitals with the superb animals on others, how early and complete was the mastery won by the Romanesque *imagiers* over birds and beasts and decorative designs, and how many difficulties beset the successful rendering of figure sculpture. I think it safe to assert that study from nature, both of plants and animals, paved the way for the study of the human form. The art of the copyist, however admirable his model, is a lifeless thing. But the flora and fauna at Moissac have a vigour and reality which could only come from close observation of nature.

In the previous chapter I have referred to the obvious

relationship between some of the capitals at Moissac—notably Daniel in the Lions' Den—and the earlier capitals from the Daurade now in the Museum at Toulouse. This link is of great importance, as it establishes the fact that men from the one *atelier* worked at the other.* Formerly the cloister was paved with incrusted tiles put in by Bertrand de Montaigu. These were smashed to pieces during the Revolution, when cavalry were stabled in the cloister. It seems incredible that as late as 1850, soldiers were quartered in or near the cloister and were allowed to do still further damage.

I now come to the most difficult appreciation which awaits any student of Romanesque art—when and where did monumental sculpture in France revive? The portal at Moissac raises the whole question in concrete form, and the right answer, could we find it, would set many speculations and theories at rest. Unfortunately archæologists are hopelessly divided among themselves as to what the answer should be, and the evidence is lost which alone could settle the points in dispute.

The problem may be stated as follows: Is it to Toulouse and the School of Languedoc, or to Burgundy and the influence of Cluny, that we must look for the revival of monumental sculpture in France? Monsieur Mâle asserts categorically that monumental art, lost for centuries, reappeared about the year 1100 in the south of France, and reveals itself in a prodigious masterpiece, the tympanum of Moissac. In his view, sculpture reappears as the bas relief, not as statuary. Inevitably so, for it was in the beginning merely the transposition into stone of designs taken from illuminated manuscripts. Monsieur Mâle has pointed out the close relationship between the tympanum of Moissac and an illuminated manuscript known as the Apocalypse of St. Sever preserved in the Bibliothèque Nationale at Paris. This was a Spanish manuscript composed in the eighth century by Beatus, Abbot of Liebana. It became very popular in Spain and the south of France and was constantly copied and reproduced.

* Mr. Kingsley Porter insists on the influence exercised by Santo Domingo de Silos in Spain on the cloister at Moissac.

[*Photo. Edit. Giraudon.*

MOISSAC : CAPITAL OF CLOISTER.

[P. 224

A large illustration of the vision of St. John gives all the main features of the tympanum at Moissac. Christ appears between the four symbolic animals, and round him are grouped the Elders, sitting on thrones, with crowns, viols, and vases. Monsieur Mâle holds that the Moissac Christ in Glory is the earliest example of tympanum sculpture; that it inspired the tympanum of Cluny, unhappily destroyed; and that the idea reached Suger at St. Denis and was reproduced by him at Chartres. Further, that the southern sculptors evolved two other main types of tympanum, the Last Judgment, as at Beaulieu, and the Ascension, as at St. Sernin—in a word, that monumental sculpture radiated northwards from the School of Toulouse.*

To differ from Monsieur Mâle is an act of great temerity on my part, but I find it difficult to accept this theory as it stands. Art was reviving throughout Europe during the eleventh and twelfth centuries, and great and original schools flower almost spontaneously in different places and in different countries. That the influence of Toulouse spread to the north; that Suger, a man of genius ever sensitive to the genius of others, brought men from the *ateliers* of Languedoc to work at St. Denis; that the *ateliers* of St. Denis, enriched by all that Suger had gathered up, worked subsequently at Chartres—these are speculations regarded by many archæologists not only as probable but practically established. But, so far as " origins " are concerned, Monsieur Mâle's view does not seem to me to lay sufficient stress on the preponderating influence exercised by Cluny on the whole development of twelfth-century architecture. The real point of departure in Romanesque sculpture, so far as any point can be indicated, is not Toulouse but the crypt of St. Bénigne at Dijon.

We saw in Chapter VI how William of Volpiano, an Italian monk, returned with St. Mayeul to Cluny about the year 985, and was sent in 989 from Cluny to Dijon to reform the monastery of St. Bénigne. Subsequently he rebuilt the church on a magnificent scale between the years 1000 and 1015. His learned Lombard monks and Italian workmen offer a clue of the first importance in any effort to

* Mâle, " L'Art Religieux du 12ème Siècle."

trace the stream back to its headwaters. The traffic between Cluny and Italy was continuous. Burgundy lay on the high road between the two countries. The abbots, as we saw, made light of the Alps and journeyed constantly to and fro. There was a constant interchange of men and ideas. Through the medium of Cluny, Lombardo-Byzantine influences flowed into France from Italy. The eclipse of sculpture was never so complete in Italy as in France. Mr. Royall Tyler speaks of sculpture in the round at Byzantium during years when all sculpture was held to be in abeyance. Works of art from this source found their way into Italy. The fire may at times have burnt low, but it was never extinguished. In any event, the abundant classical remains, however neglected, must have borne their silent witness to the heritage of the past. Culture persisted in Northern Italy. Lombardy came to the fore and played a vigorous part during the Carolingian Renaissance. Lombard decoration certainly influenced the Romanesque schools in Southern France. Famous churches built by Lombard monks survive in both England and France. Apocryphal though the works of the Maestri Comacini are, Lombardy was noted for its masons.

The debt of France to Italy is as clearly proved as any fact in the twelfth century, though whatever coin was advanced to France she turned it into a currency all her own. Cluny was the soul of the Revival of Learning; Cluny was the organiser of the Compostela pilgrimage; the Cluniac abbeys and religious houses were scattered throughout Europe. Whatever Italian influences reached Toulouse and other places on the pilgrimage roads, Burgundy must in large measure have been the distributing centre.

Development, it is true, may have followed parallel lines in Languedoc and Burgundy. The tympana of Cluny and Moissac appear, so far as we can date them at all, to have been contemporary works. But the evidence points to Burgundy as being first in the field. It will be remembered that the church of St. Bénigne at Dijon, built by William of Volpiano between 1000 and 1015, had capitals decorated with figure sculpture. The capitals

that remain in the crypt are rude in the extreme, but at least they prove that sculptors were at work at Dijon one hundred years before the tympanum at Moissac was begun.

The vile creatures who blew up the church at Cluny destroyed every vestige of the Christ in Glory over the west door. Were any fragments of it in existence, answers to these questions might be more easily forthcoming. But I am puzzled why Monsieur Mâle should think that the tympanum at Cluny was necessarily inspired by the Christ in Glory at Moissac. We cannot date the tympanum at Moissac with any exactness, but if the bas reliefs of Abbot Ansquitil's cloister are a measure of the standard of execution reached by the year 1100, it would be a miracle if the tympanum were earlier than 1125 or 1130. Some archæologists, it must be remembered, place it much later in the twelfth century.

It is unlikely that the Abbey Church of Cluny (begun in 1088) was finished by the year 1132, when Innocent II. paid a prolonged visit to Burgundy and consecrated the building. Neither is it likely that the tympanum now destroyed was in place. But sufficient weight in this controversy has not, I think, been laid on the evidence afforded by the capitals of the Seasons and Virtues described in Chapter VII. These capitals decorated the sanctuary, and, since church building almost invariably began at the east end, must have been in place at the time of the consecration. As we saw, they are neither crude nor primitive but works of art of the first order. Moissac owed everything ecclesiastically to its reform by Cluny. It was as a Cluniac monastery that it rose to power and fame. Much internal evidence points to close relations artistically between the School of Burgundy and the School of Toulouse—the two angels on the tympanum at Moissac are long, emaciated figures uncommonly like the angels we meet in Burgundy. Moissac and the School of Toulouse, of course, gave as well as received. The spirit of the one enriched the other.

The evolution of sculpture during the early years of the twelfth century was very rapid, and different schools had

their own qualities and faults. There is no trace among the Seasons and Virtues at Cluny of that excessive elongation which catches the eye in the tympanum of Autun and Vézelay, or of the great but sombre sculptures of the portal at Moissac. On the other hand, the Cluny figures in their rhythm and grace frequently recall the beautiful fragments from the Daurade and St. Étienne. The Cluny inspiration is more happy, more beautiful. They breathe something of the old classical joy in the things of daily life. Whatever the pious iconography set before the artist, it is clear that he is not troubling his head overmuch with threats of Hell or hopes of Paradise. He is, first and foremost, an artist thinking of eternal values in art. Once again I must insist on an oft repeated principle. The sculpture we are discussing is neither Italian, nor Greek, nor Byzantine, nor Arab, but *French*. French Romanesque, both in architecture and sculpture, is splendidly itself. Like a man of genius, it has no need to appeal to ancestors, however illustrious. But neither great art nor great living will ever seek to cut itself loose from the chain of human experience which, linking age to age, gives to every generation a content nobler than its own. The torch is fashioned in many different ways; the spark of beauty and truth it bears is the eternal gift of God to man. Romanesque art, like every other art, had its origins and its beginnings. French sculpture drew, as we saw, not only upon artistic ideas from the East, but from those of other races who peopled the Mediterranean basin. And no source of inspiration will seem to us more natural than what it owes to that Saturnian land whose literature and art are among the supreme possessions of mankind.

CHAPTER XIV

BEAULIEU—SOUILLAC—CAHORS

Before we leave Languedoc I must speak briefly of the influence of the School of Toulouse in three places, all remarkable for their sculpture—Beaulieu, Souillac, and Cahors.

Beaulieu and Souillac can be visited easily from Brive, which is a pleasant place situated on the main road between Toulouse and Limoges. Cahors lies 100 kilometres to the south. Brive, I might add, has an interesting church and an excellent inn, the Hôtel de Bordeaux, kept by a French family who have lived in England. Beaulieu is 41 kilometres distant, Souillac 31.

Beaulieu

Beaulieu is a remote commune in the Corrèze, beautifully situated on that noble river the Dordogne. But assuredly it is one of the most squalid places in France. Streets, houses, people are all in an incredible state of dirt. Mr. Kipling, in an unforgettable description of Canton, wrote that if you hit a corner off the street it would drip blood. Similarly at Beaulieu you have the impression that the houses if touched would exude filth. The valley of the Dordogne, with its wooded hills and broad waters, is wonderfully beautiful. But no place was ever more ironically named than this morose little town. Dirty children and a few sullen, semi-savage people watched us sourly as we picked our way among the smells and garbage of the streets. Go and see Beaulieu. The church is well worth it. But do not imagine it is a spot where you will want to dally or to eat.

The Romanesque church, once a Benedictine abbey, though horribly neglected, is a very fine building conceived

on spacious lines. It has three naves, a wide transept, and an ambulatory with radiating chapels. The tympanum of the south door has near and obvious kinship with the Christ in Glory at Moissac. The general composition, though not the subject, is identical. The Beaulieu tympanum, if not the first, is one of the earliest attempts to treat the Last Judgment in stone. The work looks crude and archaic, so much so that some archæologists have regarded Beaulieu as the prototype of Moissac. But the majority hold the view that Beaulieu derives from Moissac and not the other way about. The work has defects, but they are the defects of sculptors who have abandoned stereotyped forms and are groping after a study of real life. A figure of Christ with arms outstretched fills the middle of the tympanum. In the heavens behind appears a cross upheld by angels. Two angels in the foreground, blowing long oliphants, summon the dead to judgment. Apostles sit or stand to right and left of Christ, talking together with the intensity of the groups on the tympanum at Vézelay. The damned and the blessed are herded on each side after the conventional fashion of Heaven and Hell. Beaulieu, like Moissac, has two lintels, but the Moissac elders are replaced by a frieze of fantastic animals, some of which are tearing the damned to pieces. The Moissac *rosaces* appear on the lower lintel, but they are partly concealed by a string of beasts entwined among them. The central *trumeau* consists not of interlaced lions, but of three beautiful caryatides, who hold up the lintel with a certain effort. Taking it all round, the tympanum at Beaulieu, though less splendid than Moissac, is in some ways more human. The angels who carry the Cross and the little angels with instruments of the crucifixion are gracious figures. The Christ with His arms outstretched is a great pitying figure, who has Himself known the extremity of pain. The unknown sculptor has treated the head with extraordinary realism. This is no remote impersonal deity like the Moissac Christ. The words from Isaiah, " His visage was so marred more than any man," must, I think, occur to anyone who studies this ravaged but moving countenance. The outstretched arms of the

Christ recall the legend that in the day when mankind is perfected, the Cross shall vanish altogether, and the gesture of sacrifice remain as a gesture of blessing.

The Beaulieu tympanum may look archaic owing to certain faults in technique, but in feeling it is coming very near the humanism of the Gothic period. Suger may have heard of this Last Judgment and brought workmen from the southern *ateliers* to carry out the same idea at St. Denis.

As at Moissac, the south door at Beaulieu has a recessed porch with arcades on the side walls. These were filled with groups of sculpture representing David and Habbakuk and the Temptation in the Wilderness. They are, however, too mutilated to make any detailed account of them possible. Again, like Moissac, the door jambs are decorated by bas reliefs of a prophet and an Apostle.

Souillac

Souillac is finely situated on the Dordogne some 40 kilometres below Beaulieu. Between Brive and Montauban the railway line crosses the three parallel river basins of the Dordogne, the Lot, and the Tarn, and the scenery is hilly and beautiful.

No book on the French Romanesque is complete without a reference, however brief, to the extraordinary sculptures at Souillac. The church, with its single nave covered by domes on pendentives, its transept, and its apse with radiating chapels, is an excellent example of twelfth-century Romanesque. But our business at Souillac is with sculpture rather than with architecture. Housed for safety within the church are some fragments which once formed part of an external porch. We know nothing of the general plan of the porch or how these fragments were arranged. It is easily understood that, torn from their proper surroundings and divorced from any architectural plan, they show to the worst advantage. Even so, twelfth-century sculpture can point to nothing more remarkable than the three objects which make the fame of Souillac—the *trumeau*, the bas relief with the legend of Theophilus, and the figure of the prophet Isaiah.

The lions and lionesses of the *trumeau* at Moissac, though more decorative, must yield place for sheer devilment, and also, I think, for sheer skill, to the *trumeau* of Souillac. It is the most fantastic production of an age always haunted, as we have seen, by strange animals. At first sight the *trumeau* appears to be a horrible tangle of interlaced and devouring beasts carved with uncanny power. But, little by little, plan and symmetry evolve themselves out of this confusion. A thin moulding encloses the four angles of the pillar, though it often loses itself among the struggling animals. The shaft stands on a broad plinth, with two horrid little dogs and a repulsive-looking frog at the base. Above this comes a crossed X, four times repeated, of a winged quadruped with an eagle's head alternating with another beast. Three lions' heads are introduced in regular sequence. The lion and the winged beast devour in turn first a goat, then a boar, then a goose, finally, at the top of the pillar, a man. The malevolence of the beasts, the anguish and despair of the victims who are being bitten and pecked to death, are rendered with too much realism for comfort.

The animals occupy the front of the shaft. No less surprising are the scenes to right and left. On one side we have the sacrifice of Isaac. It was difficult to fit a Biblical scene into the long and narrow proportions of a column, and the story has been arranged in three compartments. Still more surprising is the decoration of the opposite face. This consists of a theme, three times repeated, of a man and woman locked tightly in each other's arms. The lowest couple stand on a dragon, and the criss-cross of the entwined arms carries out the same idea as the criss-cross of the animals.

I do not know whether the thoroughgoing symbolist is prepared to deal with this extraordinary piece of work on symbolic lines and demonstrate the pious allegories it teaches. More to the point is Monsieur Mâle's discovery of an illustration in a tenth-century Bible, now in the Bibliothèque Nationale, but formerly the property of St. Martial of Limoges.* Two pilasters in this manuscript

* Mâle, L'Art Religieux du 12ème Siècle, p. 19.

are covered with superimposed animals, who are rending each other to pieces very much after the fashion of the Souillac *trumeau*. These canons in the Limoges Bible are in turn reproductions of Syrian canons, which embody all the old traditions of Asia. The Souillac *trumeau* at many removes is Oriental both in inspiration and design. Strange is it indeed that on the banks of the Dordogne we should catch echoes of the Tigris and Euphrates. Though the permeation of Christian art by Oriental ideas is a commonplace in the Romanesque period, it never ceases to be a surprise.

Let us look now at the bas relief. The shape is curious, and it is not easy to guess what exact function it fulfilled in the decoration of the church. The figures are disposed under three richly carved arcades. To the right and left sit two saints—rather rigid, self-conscious figures. Very different is the curious and animated scene grouped under the central arcade.

After the nightmare of the *trumeau* it is a welcome relief to turn to the deacon Theophilus and his little affair with the devil. The legend of Theophilus first appears, I believe, in literature in the writings of Hrotswith, a nun of Gandersheim. There were learned ladies at the court of the Ottos, for Hrotswith was the pupil of Gerberg, a niece of Otto the Great. She wrote imitations of Terence and legends in verse, among them the story of Theophilus, which took firm hold of the popular imagination. Theophilus was a pushful young man who, like many deacons before and since, had a poor opinion of his bishop. The bishop did not appreciate as he should have appreciated the young man's talents, and Theophilus, a victim of episcopal obtuseness, languished without promotion. Tired of waiting, anxious to glorify God by building a new church, anxious, too, to score off his bishop, Theophilus, with a view to speeding up matters, sold his soul to the Devil. We see him in the bas relief trafficking with Satan, represented as a *faux bonhomme* full of geniality. Satan holds a parchment giving legal effect to the bond between the deacon and himself. The Devil was as good as his word, and for a time all went well. The bishop was confounded,

the church was built, Theophilus rose to place and power and became an abbot. Then a Devil no longer amiable but hideous reappears with the parchment and demands payment. We see the unfortunate abbot bowed before him and doing obeisance in feudal fashion to the Lord of Darkness. In the background is the church built as part of the compact. Theophilus, in despair, appeals to the Virgin, and, after fasting for three days and three nights, falls asleep on his bed. In the upper part of the bas relief we see the Virgin accompanied by three angels descending head-first from heaven. Moved by compassion, she places in the hand of Theophilus the parchment which she has forced the Devil to surrender. Theophilus repents, makes a public confession of his sins, and dies in the odour of sanctity.*

This bas relief, apart from its value as sculpture, is full of interest for the light it throws on the change in the statue of the Virgin. During the twelfth century many signs point to a steady growth in her cult. In the thirteenth century she becomes almost the most important personage in the hierarchy of Heaven. That position had not been reached in the twelfth century, but tales of her goodness and mercy were very popular, and the Miracles of Our Lady grew in number and became more and more prominent in the literature of the time. Virgin worship has been the subject of many hard words—why, I can never understand. The twelfth century has to be judged by its own standards, and this cult not only did much to improve the position of women, but was a humanising influence in a rough age. The gracious kindness of the Virgin interceding for sinners and keeping open for them the gates of Heaven was surely, as a religious conception, an advance on the horrid image of a Creator presented not only as Supreme Judge but as Supreme Torturer.

The bas relief of Isaiah probably decorated the jamb of a door. Here we have the inspiration of the School of Toulouse at its best. The figure of the prophet is being swept forward, a masterly figure instinct with life. His

* The legend of Theophilus is graphically treated by the Gothic sculptor of the north door at Notre Dame de Paris.

[*Photo. Edit. Giraudon.*

SOUILLAC : BAS RELIEF OF THEOPHILUS.

[P. 234

long robes, heavily embroidered, are caught by the wind, which seems to drive him along. In another moment you feel he will be out of the church and far away. The breath of a great inspiration blows through Languedoc sculpture at its best, and nowhere does it attain to more complete power of self-expression than in the marvellous figure at Souillac.

Cahors.

Cahors can be reached easily from Moissac by a road over the *causses*. The high lands are bare and rather desolate, but the scenery becomes more genial as the road descends to the valley of the Lot. Cahors is a very ancient town, and has a famous bridge with six spans and three towers—the most perfect example in existence, so it is claimed, of early fourteenth-century bridge building. I gather it had to fight for its life in recent times to avoid the attentions of City Fathers, who yearned to instal something attractive in its place made of iron or ferro-concrete. Happily the bridge had the best of the tussle. France has lost too much in the past through ignorance or ill-will to allow any further pranks within her gates in the name of that long-suffering divinity Progress.

The cathedral of St. Étienne was consecrated early in the twelfth century, and consists of a nave with two bays covered by large cupolas. The tympanum of the north door marks the furthest extension northwards of the School of Toulouse, though, so far from home, it is only natural that other influences make themselves felt. This little tympanum of the Ascension is an exquisite piece of work. A good deal of uncertainty exists as to its date. At one time it was regarded as a product of the late Romanesque period and already affected by Gothic ideas. But more recent study attributes it to a date not later than the middle of the twelfth century. Obviously, if the sculptures at Cahors exercised any influence on the cathedral at Angoulême,* they must be earlier than the end of the century. This beautiful tympanum must therefore be regarded as an example of mature Romanesque art rather than of the

* See page 350.

Gothic transition, though, as we shall see later on, in Île de France the transition in both sculpture and architecture had begun by 1144, the date of the consecration of St. Denis.

At Cahors grotesques in the form of corbel heads already look down on you from the cornice that runs round the exterior of the church. A band of *rinceaux*, carved with homely scenes, frames the tympanum to great advantage. Sculptors had travelled far since the days when the Ascension was uncovered at St. Sernin. At Toulouse the heavy figures seem rooted to the ground; at Cahors the Christ in a mandorla floats upwards to Heaven, a serene figure detached from the things of earth. Two angels at His side fling themselves backwards in a splendid gesture of adoration. Other angels descend head-foremost to greet their risen Lord, and betray the violent emotion we have seen elsewhere in Romanesque sculpture.

This tympanum is at once more beautiful and more sophisticated than any of the great masterpieces already described in this book. Sculpture is more perfect but less adventurous. The compartments in the upper part of the tympanum devoted to the scenes from the life of St. Stephen are trivial in conception and design. But how beautiful is the frieze of this tympanum! Under an arcade with trefoil arches and slim columns are grouped the Virgin and the Apostles. At Cahors as at Souillac we see the Virgin advancing to that position of supreme eminence which she is to fill in the great cathedrals of the thirteenth century. At Cahors she stands alone in the centre of the frieze, a tranquil figure who commands the reverence and attention of the Apostles gathered round her. No doubt, no sorrow even, disturbs her calm as the heavens open to receive her Son. The same sobriety marks the figures of the Apostles. The rude energy of an earlier period gives way before the repose of a more perfect technique. At Moissac the Christ speaks of judgment; at Beaulieu of pity; at Cahors of peace. Cahors may not belong, strictly speaking, to the Gothic transition, but its sculptures make us feel an approaching change in values. Greater perfection is at hand, but with it a certain lack of power and audacity; there is more assurance and less deep emotion.

[*Photo. Edit. Giraudon.*

CAHORS : FIGURE OF CHRIST FROM TYMPANUM.

[P. 236

All this forms part of a natural evolution. After the gloom of the Dark Ages the twelfth century is like a pillar of fire, guiding men through the desert to a promised land of greater ease and fulfilment. But the desert is a rough place, and the art—noble, sincere, impetuous—that marks this great adventure of the human spirit is elemental in quality—elemental as on the day when the morning stars sang together and the sons of God shouted for joy.

PART IV

AUVERGNE AND CENTRE

CHAPTER XV

AUVERGNE AND SIDONIUS APOLLINARIS

AUVERGNE sits high and aloof in the centre of France—the donjon of the Massif Central. Every traveller with a motor-car realises the obstacles presented by this block of hills to any free passage from the Rhone Valley on the east to the western side of France. Main roads across the hills are few in number, and you must make many detours both north and south to reach the valleys of the Garonne, the Lot, or the Dordogne. Yet this rugged district can hardly be numbered among the great mountains of Europe. Plomb du Cantal, its highest point, is under 6,000 feet high. In altitude Auvergne cannot rival the outposts of the Alps, its distant neighbours on the east, though it has geological interest and austere charm of its own. The province consists of a tumbled mass of volcanic rocks, tossed about and twisted out of shape during the appalling convulsions of the Tertiary period. A chain of volcanoes, long since at rest, runs from south-west to north-east. These are staged by some geological freak on a crystalline plateau and fall into two main groups—the Cantal, with its culminating point in the south; Mont Dore, Puy de Dôme, and the chain of volcanoes, known as the Mont Dômes, in the north. These latter form a half-circle to the west of Clermont-Ferrand, and must have been imposing beacons during the days of their activity. Though lava streams flow no more, fires still smoulder below the surface, as proved by numerous spas, famed for their baths and hot springs. Royat and Mont Dore among the hills, Vichy in the valley of the Allier, are household names. The scenery has the restless appearance common to volcanic countries. Now and again fertile plains open out unexpectedly among the hills. These open spaces are, in fact, the beds of prehistoric lakes, whose waters have long since

drained away. Here, as elsewhere, the good things of life are dealt out with unequal hand. Auvergne is a country of agricultural contrasts, and the heavy cultivation of the Limagnes, as they are called, is a very different thing from the scanty pasturage of the uplands. In form the province is roughly an amphitheatre of hills; but—geographical fact of no small importance—to the north there is a break in the natural defences. The plain of the Limagne—a generic name becomes special at this point—stretches both north and south from Clermont-Ferrand, and faces Paris without the intervention of any obstacle between an invader and itself. Isolated, almost impregnable, on three sides, no country could be more vulnerable on the fourth. The Limagne is a plain of extraordinary wealth and fertility, watered by the Allier as it flows northwards on its journey to join the Loire. Here cultivation is carried to that high point of perfection common in France. But among the hills and valleys of the interior, life was rude and difficult in the past, and is still isolated and laborious.

In winter snow lies deep on the mountains and the lower levels of the *causses*. Wind is a real enemy in Auvergne. The dominant air currents, finding their free passage hampered by the tumble of volcanic rocks, take their revenge in tempests and cyclones, and a terrible local manifestation known as the *écir*. Lives are sometimes lost in the whirling masses of snow comparable with the dust spirals of a sandstorm. The men and women of a hill country always bear the stamp of their origin and are apt to be reserved, tenacious folk. Certainly this is true in Auvergne. It has always been a country standing rather apart from the normal concerns of France, cherishing its own individuality and going its own way, even when fate has imposed a change of masters. Passionate loyalty to the existing order has marked the course of Auvergne history throughout the centuries. A Gallic stronghold in pre-Roman days, the Arvernes, as they were known, proved the backbone of the resistance against Julius Cæsar. Vercingetorix was a native of Auvergne, and, at Gergovie near Clermont-Ferrand, inflicted the one substantial check on the Roman advance. After the defeat and melancholy end of the

great hero of Gaul—a story that reflects no credit on Julius Cæsar—the Arvernes made terms with the conquerors, and in time became devoted and loyal upholders of the Roman Empire. As they fought to the last to defend the liberties of ancient Gaul, so they proved themselves four centuries later no less dogged and attached to Rome in the agony of her death struggle against Goths and Franks. The Gallo-Roman phase of Auvergne history showed the Pax Romana at its best. As we see it, even in the days of its decadence, reflected for us in the pages of Sidonius Apollinaris, the impression is one of wealth, peace, and culture.

Christianity established itself with very little disturbance on the ruins of the Pagan cults. Even the Barbarian invaders—Visigoths, Burgundians, Franks—were in large measure transformed by the old order they overthrew. But, some centuries later, during the chaos that followed the death of Charlemagne and the general disintegration of society during the tenth century, life in Auvergne must have been as wild as the scenery. Castles were multiplied. Every basalt peak was crowned by a fortress. It was in no friendly spirit that strong towers came to overlook fords and passes. The Church played an honourable part in protecting the poor and standing for the just principles of decency and order during this reign of violence. Famous monasteries were founded and rose to positions of considerable power. Aurillac, Brioude, Mozat; last, but not least, La Chaise-Dieu. The Cluniac reform took firm hold of Auvergne, and in 1095 it was at Clermont-Ferrand, then the seat of an important bishopric, that Urban II. preached the First Crusade. The Church established a considerable measure of peace, and the Compostela pilgrimage brought hosts of pilgrims to worship at Auvergne shrines on the road to Galicia. Auvergne had at this time a strongly marked individuality of its own. Grounded in the Roman tradition, the inhabitants, as I have said, clung tenaciously to Roman ideas. Rome, in the hour of her decadence, had left her stamp on language, literature, and art. But a remote province, distracted by civil strife, could not hope to create and sustain the measure of temporal power wielded by the dukes of Burgundy, or the counts of Toulouse, or

a family like the Guilhems in Aquitaine. The Capetian kings, sitting with a limited realm in Île de France, were bent, as we have seen elsewhere, on enlarging their coast by swallowing up quarrelsome powers. Auvergne was no exception to the rule. Absorbed by the French monarchy, she remained true to her own tradition of fidelity to the conqueror. The province went through many ups and downs of civil strife and religious persecution, but loyalty to the Crown remained a dominant sentiment. The wars of religion left Auvergne sadly impoverished, and economic prosperity, in any real sense, has been a product of the nineteenth century.

Since the days of Vercingetorix Auvergne has played no leading part in the affairs of France. With one or two exceptions, she has contributed few outstanding figures to politics, literature, and art. Her record, to put it bluntly, is dull. She has had her share of honest and able administrators, who probably serve a country far better in the long run than the star turns who flash through history. Michel de l'Hôpital and Lafayette are citizens on whose memories she can dwell with pride. But, apart from Pascal, Auvergne has given no writer of first-rate intellectual eminence to France. The name that confers, if not lustre, yet abiding interest on Auvergne, belongs to the Gallo-Roman period. Sidonius Apollinaris, Prefect of Rome and Bishop of Clermont, is a figure of real historical importance. For he stands, as few others, on the watershed between the classical and modern worlds, and his letters are unique in the light they throw on the greatest change in history. Born in the last days of Roman rule, he lived to see the final collapse of the Western Empire and the abdication of the last Emperor of the West. The fall of Romulus Augustulus in 475 must have hit Sidonius very hard, though as a Christian he may have caught some glimpses of a new dawn in the sky unvouchsafed to many of his contemporaries.

The Gallo-Roman period left so vital an imprint on later Romanesque art, that I make no apology in this chapter for leaving the affairs of the twelfth century to consider those of the fifth, as seen through the eyes of Sidonius Apollinaris in Auvergne.

The final extinction of Roman rule in Gaul presents some disconcerting aspects to the ardent believer in progress. Contrast the order and security of life during the last days of the empire with the chaos and violence of the early Middle Ages. The Roman villas were as innocent of defence as the country houses of today. They point to a very different state of society from the castles and fortresses of a later period, when every household lived under perpetual menace from its neighbour. Nature invariably shocks us by the wastefulness of her methods. Prodigal in her creation and destruction of life where the evolution of the species is concerned, she is equally ruthless and extravagant in her experiments with human material. A race, a civilisation is tossed on to the scrap heap without a scruple, when the hour has struck for a new adventure. From that scrap heap a later generation often recovers at great cost priceless fragments with which it adorns its own edifice. Trails are lost, avenues of thought closed, lessons forgotten that have to be painfully relearnt. Over and over again we ask ourselves, Why such waste? Seen *sub specie æternitatis*, this process, apparently so wasteful, may fall into line and be as necessary and as inevitable as the cold and darkness of the winter are essential to the growth of the seed lost to sight in the earth. It may be that the fall of a famous nation only presents a melancholy study to those whose view is short. But the great baseline of eternity is not always at hand when estimating our earthly trials and losses, and it requires considerable philosophy to contemplate unmoved the Barbarian enthroned on the ruins of Greece and Rome. Yet as we look below the surface of the Gallo-Roman society, and realise its great wealth, its mediocre statesmen, and its crowd of third-rate literary people, all active members of a mutual admiration society, it becomes clear that, for the moment at least, the traditions of both Greece and Rome had spent themselves. Like soil exhausted by too close cropping, the fallow period was necessary before they flowered anew.

Sidonius Apollinaris was born at Lyons about the year 431. He belonged to one of the Roman families, who owned great estates in Gaul, lived sumptuous and cultured

lives, and went their way curiously undisturbed, so it seems to us, by the neighbourhood of Burgundian and Visigothic invaders. If not born in the purple, Apollinaris was near to it. His father and his grandfather had been prefects of Gaul; his father-in-law Avitus became emperor. Life smiled on the young man, whose early days were pleasant and prosperous. By birth he was acquainted or connected with the leading families of the Gallo-Roman society. His marriage with Papianilla, daughter of Avitus, brought him the fine estate of Avitacum, near Clermont-Ferrand, as her dowry. The schools of Lyons were famous, and Apollinaris, from an early date, was marked out for literary distinction. The patrician families in Gaul had, in modern phraseology, highbrow tastes. Administrative duties fell to the lot of the few. Rhetoric, poems, correspondence with their friends, occupied the majority in the intervals of estate management, sport, and banquets. In a decadent society literature may linger on, a shadow of its former greatness, though the life has gone out of it. Much of the literary output of the fifth century is poor stuff, stilted, artificial, and lacking in real quality. Sidonius, as a writer, is no exception to this rule. Posterity has dealt very roughly with the literary pretensions of a man lauded and flattered in his own time and cherishing the ambition to live in history as a second Pliny the Younger. But Fate, though denying to Sidonius fame along the lines he sought, has, by a whimsical turn, conferred it on him in another sense. He survives as an outstanding figure in the history of the fifth century, the authority to whom appeal is made in any review of that troubled period. His letters, derided as literary compositions, are a precious storehouse of persons and events, whose record otherwise would have perished. And when the verbiage is stripped away from Sidonius, the second-rate man of letters, the man himself is revealed as a noble and lovable character.

His life falls into two clear-cut halves. One concerns his career as a Roman statesman, the other his later days as Bishop of Clermont. Few personages have proved so clearly the possession of a pilgrim soul. He illustrates in a

special way the development of Christian character among the ruins of the Pagan world. Sidonius as a young man was ambitious. He had been brought up in that perfunctory practice of the Christian religion which sat lightly on a solid core of Pagan sentiment. The goal of worldly advancement was normal in his class, and Sidonius turned his literary abilities to this end. Panegyrics to emperors and conquerors do not appeal to us as a method of getting on in life; if people have minds, we prefer to see them used with independence. But at this stage of his career Sidonius may be termed the perpetual panegyrist. The path of success opened in broad and smiling fashion before the young man when his father-in-law became emperor in 455. Already an accomplished scholar, he went with Avitus to Rome, and there became famous, thanks to the panegyric delivered on the new holder of the purple. So greatly was this oration esteemed, that its author was awarded a statue in the Forum. During the fifth century the days of any given Cæsar were apt to be brief and evil, and a year later Avitus was defeated and dethroned. Marjorian, his successor, invaded Gaul and captured Lyons. Sidonius, who had proved an energetic defender of the city, was taken prisoner, but soon made terms with the conqueror. His literary abilities appealed to Marjorian, and within a very few months Sidonius produced a second panegyric, this time in praise of Marjorian. Marjorian was assassinated in 461, and once again Sidonius saw his hopes blasted. But, after an interval of chaos, Anthemius, a Byzantine soldier of considerable eminence, became emperor in 467. Since the death of Marjorian, Sidonius had spent six years of unwelcome obscurity in Gaul, leading the life of a country gentleman at Avitacum. Once again he faced the situation with a panegyric. Sent with a deputation to Rome to laud the merits of the new emperor, he was soon established in high imperial favour. He was made a prefect, and became President of the Senate.

But Sidonius, though given to flattery where his ambitions were concerned, was an honest man. Intrigues, violence, surged round his exalted position in Rome, and, like many other holders of high office before and since, he

found his anxieties as well as his honours multiplied. He was called upon to deal with embarrassing circumstances that caused him great perplexity. The insecurity of the new emperor was patent, though he had given his daughter in marriage to Ricimius—the skin-clad Barbarian who stood in menacing guise behind the imperial throne. Anxious and disillusioned, Sidonius laid down his office and retired to Gaul. As an administrator he was probably unequal to a task that called for other qualities than those of a pretty literary gift and a facile pen. The high, though empty, title of patrician was given to him on retirement. He had reached the first rank in the State; he had won its most coveted honours. But it is clear that he left Rome a disappointed and unhappy man, found wanting, not by his fellows, but before the more deadly tribunal of his own conscience.

And now comes for Sidonius that spiritual adventure on the road to Damascus, of which St. Paul is the great prototype, but assuredly not the only witness. Back at his beloved Avitacum, what vision touched the weary soul of the man who had emptied the cup of worldly ambition and found the dregs bitter? Roman gentlemen were reticent people, not given to an analysis of their own emotions, and Sidonius has left us no record of what, in a very real sense, must have been his conversion. But, two years later, when summoned to be Bishop of Clermont in 472, we meet him again, not the professional priest holding high office for political purposes, but a devout and humble Christian whose life bears every mark of grace. The real interest of Sidonius lies in this fundamental change of outlook, and the proof it affords of the new leaven at work in the world. It may startle a modern reader to hear of a Roman senator passing almost at a bound from the position of layman to that of bishop. But the organisation of the Church was widely different in those days from ours. On the one hand were priests and bishops who practised great austerities; on the other bishops were frequently chosen as trusted men of affairs to guide the temporal as well as the spiritual destinies of their flocks.

The letters of Sidonius to his fellow-bishops when called by urgent public demand to be Bishop of Clermont leave

us in no doubt as to the spirit of real humility in which he approached his task. Purged of the old ambitions, he brought new and revitalised energies to the duties of his see. He proved in every respect an admirable father in God to the distracted community he was called upon to rule. For the final dissolution of Roman rule in Gaul was at hand, and it was the melancholy duty of Sidonius to live through that period and protect his people from the cruelties of the conqueror.

Barbarian invasions in Gaul had proceeded by stages. The Visigoths had long been established at Bordeaux, at Toulouse, and at Narbonne. Sidonius, as a young man, had visited Toulouse, and in a letter has left us a graphic account of the court of Theodoric II. We read of the king's daily routine, of his early prayers with his priests, of administrative duties, of inspection of the treasure chamber and stables, of exercise, and hunting. Dinner, neither too long nor too elaborate, was carefully but not luxuriously served. After dinner came a pause for a siesta or games, then the duties of government were resumed till the hour of a simple supper. No less vivid is his account of the young Frankish prince, Sigismer, whom he saw at Lyons. We see the fair youth, on his way to wed a Burgundian princess, dressed in a flame-red mantle and white silk tunic, and attended by savage-looking guards, wearing short tunics, green mantles, coats of skins fastened by brooches, and boots of bristly hide. The Gallo-Romans had become familiar with invaders of this type, and lived among them on peaceful terms. But Euric, a man of very different quality from his brother Theodoric II., was now in the saddle as King of the Visigoths, and determined once and for all to make an end of Roman rule in Gaul. Auvergne, with characteristic loyalty, remained faithful to Rome, even when the bitter realisation had dawned that no help would be forthcoming in their struggles from the dying imperial power. Sidonius Apollinaris was the soul of the resistance made by the Arvernians against the invasions of Euric. By diplomacy, by persuasion, by personal activity and personal courage, the Bishop of Clermont was untiring in his efforts to hearten his people

in this final struggle. Clermont fell at last, after a stubborn siege, and Sidonius was made prisoner. In 475 the resistance of the Arvernians, after bitter suffering and privation, was beaten flat. Rome, in that year, renounced all rights to Auvergne, and ceded the territory to Euric; the inhabitants, apparently, being left to make the best terms they could with the conqueror. It was the darkest hour in the life of Sidonius Apollinaris.

Euric was a harsh man, and an Arian, but he was not lacking in statesmanship, and set about the administration of his new territory on reasonable lines. Naturally enough, he was not at first disposed to show much clemency to the bishop, whose energetic defence had caused him so much trouble. Sidonius was for a time imprisoned near Narbonne. Subsequently he was allowed to visit Bordeaux, where he had powerful friends at the court of Euric. While waiting anxiously for news of his property—Avitacum had been confiscated—something uncommonly like a eulogy of Euric slipped from his pen when writing to a friend in high favour with the king. Finally he was pardoned, and sent back to Clermont to resume his duties as bishop of the see. There he devoted himself in a dark hour to the cause of his fellow-countrymen. The lamp of faith burnt ever clearer in these closing years, and the love and veneration of the Arvernians must have done much to comfort his despondency and strengthen his fortitude. The weaker sides had been purged away, and in the twilight of the Pagan world, he stands, not only the last of the Gallo-Romans, but a great figure touched by the dawn of Christian faith and hope.

Memories of Sidonius Apollinaris still cling to Clermont-Ferrand. The date of his death is uncertain, but it caused widespread sorrow through Auvergne. The sanctity of his later life led, in due course, to canonisation, and until the Revolution his bones were preserved in the church of St. Genesius at Clermont. The church was destroyed in 1794, and the dust of the bishop finally scattered to the winds.

It was during the last phase of his life that, as a distraction from melancholy thoughts, Sidonius was persuaded

by his friends to collect and edit his letters. Undoubtedly he thought his works would live and ensure him a niche in the temple of fame. So, for reasons little anticipated by himself, they have done. Letters whose interest is oblique and accidental are often tantalising documents. Poor Sidonius would have been horrified to know that a later generation would treat his panegyrics as monuments of dullness, and complain that he leaves unsaid too many details about the daily life of ordinary men and women. His references to the churches in Gaul are exasperating to an archæologist. He tells us that the church built in his time at Tours over the body of St. Martin, was the seventh wonder of the world, resplendent with gold and silver. But on what plan was it built? Sidoniu smakes no attempt to describe it in detail. We saw in Chapter V. that St. Martin of Tours, at a later date, was probably the prototype of all the great churches along the Compostela routes. But did this fifth-century basilica introduce new principles that may have influenced the whole development of church architecture in the west? More accurate observation and fewer adjectives would have been a boon to posterity. Sidonius took little interest, apparently, in architecture or the plastic arts, but he is more explicit about a new church at Lyons. The church, so he writes, "extended neither to right nor left," and had "a towering front looking towards the equinoctial sunrise." This orientation points to an altar at the western end. There was a triple portico "proudly set on Aquitanian columns," and a similar portico closed the atrium on the further side. The hid space was "flanked off by columns, numerous as forest stems." Sidonius speaks of the gilding of the coffered ceiling which "allured sunbeams golden as itself." Windows, apparently, were plentiful, and the basilica was bright with marbles and mosaics. Sidonius would have made all architecture his debtor, had he seen his way to sketch plans of this building and one of the basilica at Tours. Again, he could have thrown much light on the growth and development of the church, both in matters of ritual and organisation. Monasticism was a great force in his time. Sidonius was in close touch with the celebrated monastery

of Lerins on the island opposite Cannes; but, beyond an occasional reference to the discipline and austerities of the monks, we hear nothing of this primitive rule. The hint that the monks' habit was derived from the pallium worn by philosophers is very suggestive.

Sidonius has left no letter more interesting than the one that gives us an account of the family property at Avitacum. It was situated on a lake in the neighbourhood of Clermont-Ferrand, though the exact locality unfortunately is unknown. Many latter-day tourists would have found it pleasant to visit the lake and woods described in terms of such affection.

Sidonius was probably a rich man, though not among the richest in Gaul. It is staggering to realise the vast fortunes possessed by the Gallo-Roman nobility in Aquitaine, Auvergne, and other parts of Southern France. According to Sir Samuel Dill, members of the senatorial class had incomes that sometimes reached the huge figure of between £100,000 to £200,000 a year, estimated in modern money. Though they owned most of the land, they evaded taxation, lent money at a high rate of interest, and kept a sharp eye on mortgages. These huge incomes were beyond their power to spend profitably—even banquets of inordinate length and luxury could not make much of a hole in such revenues. And so we have the spectacle of useless wealth and useless lives, throwing intolerable burthens on the middle and lower classes, with small gains to themselves. Sidonius may have had an income of £20,000 a year in the days of his prosperity, and apparently was a landed proprietor on rather a large scale. He was deeply attached to the family house at Avitacum, and pays a pretty compliment to his wife when he says that the name had a sweeter sound in his ears than any of his own possessions, inasmuch as it came to him through her. The house stood on the banks of a lake at the foot of a large hill. A log run brought wood from the forest above to the mouth of the furnace that heated the elaborate system of baths. Sidonius prides himself on the fact that no frescoed scene obtrudes its "comely nudities" in his frigidarium.* Near the front

* Dalton, "Letters of Sidonius," p. 67.

entrance of the house was a long covered space used, like a verandah or stoep, for sitting out. We hear of a winter dining-room with a roaring fire, a summer dining-room with its dining-couch and sideboard and cool withdrawing-room. Beyond that were the store-room and the weaving-room. Boating on the lake was one of the pleasures of country life, though Sidonius says enough to prove that squalls and bad weather must have made it at times a perilous amusement. He also mentions a ball game of some kind, played under the shadow of two great limes.

Few things are more surprising in the social history of the fifth century than the tranquil and pleasant lives spent by the Roman nobility in Gaul when the Barbarian was literally at their door. Terms, and very easy terms, must have been made for them by the invader, who, awed no doubt by patrician prestige, clearly interfered very little during the early days with the estates and comfort of the ruling class. Very different, of course, was the condition of the long-suffering middle class, who, with the slaves and other humble folk, bore the brunt of all the calamities that fell. False social conditions and charity frequently go hand in hand. In the hour of stress Sidonius lavished large sums of money on his unfortunate fellow-countrymen, and when Euric was master of Auvergne sold his silver plate to provide for the needs of his flock. His contemporary, Bishop Patiens of Lyons, was no less famous for his benefactions. But, like many good men in all generations, they were content to relieve distress rather than probe the causes to which the disasters of the period were due. Hence the curious spectacle of the dissolution of the Roman Empire taking place under eyes apparently holden to the fact of the social and political collapse that was imminent.

This Gallo-Roman society of the fifth century has a curious parallel in another age. Across the centuries generations touch; the wealth, the culture, the fine country houses, the sense of public duty, the total disregard of the poor and humble, save as objects of pity and patronage—this whole outlook on life links the English nobleman of the eighteenth century with the Gallo-Roman patrician of the fifth. Both had qualities as well as faults; both left a mark

on the civilisation of their age, without which the sum total of certain things might have been poorer. But the world, as constituted today, has other values of excellence than that of cultured idleness. It views, with an eye increasingly hostile, the irresponsible possession of wealth, and, as we turn the pages of the fifth as of the eighteenth century, we feel that, apart from superficial amenities and the fine life of the few, the difficult world in which we live today rests on a sounder basis and aims at better ideals.

CHAPTER XVI

THE ROMANESQUE CHURCHES OF AUVERGNE

A HILLY country, standing aloof from the affairs of its neighbours, is bound to develop an individuality special to itself. Geographically, Auvergne belongs to the southern half of Central France, but, owing to the altitude and those hard conditions of life inevitable among mountains, its temperament and ideas are not meridional. Though northern ideas have had, in fact, little influence in Auvergne, the character of the people, solid, grave, determined, suggests the races of the North Sea rather than those of the Mediterranean. They are not exactly dour, but they are not easy to place. Frankly, I must admit that of the great Romanesque schools Auvergne has to me less charm than other members of the family. The architecture, like the people, is grave and serious. There are fine churches and fine sculpture. But nowhere do we touch the high-water mark of excellence reached in Languedoc, in Burgundy, in Poitou. The Gallo-Roman imprint is marked, and the Gallo-Roman imprint is a heavy one. Hence great courage in dealing with groups of sculpture almost in the round, but failure to endow the figures with the life and grace of their classical prototypes. Fidelity, as we saw in the last chapter, was a fine quality shown by Auvergne throughout its political history. Equally there is fidelity in artistic tradition. Great art is a restless thing—on with the new love before it is off with the old, always on the alert, always bringing something new to light. But Auvergne, having evolved a certain type, remained faithful to it, both in the Romanesque and Gothic periods. Values of excellence vary within well-defined limits. There is nothing unexpected, once you know the type, either in construction or in sculpture. It is only on the borders of the province, where

other influences have swept in, that Ste. Foy at Conques and the cathedral at Le Puy transcend the normal type and have their own special beauty and originality. Hence a certain monotony in the churches of Auvergne, and the difficulty in dealing with them on other than guide-book lines. For they rarely form the background of people and events famous in the life either of France or of the Church. Historical values are, to a large extent, lacking, and though stones can be eloquent when men are silent, these particular stones all say very much the same thing. I feel it would be wearisome, therefore, to deal in repeated detail with the churches of Auvergne. Notre Dame du Port will serve as a type, and the variations elsewhere can be noted afterwards. I am not discouraging any reader, let it be understood, from a visit to Auvergne. It has many qualities both in landscape and architecture. I should like to have seen its hills on foot rather than from a motor-car, and a walking tour, for which I had no time, must have many delights.

Names and personalities, so far as I know, are wholly lacking in the story of architecture in Auvergne. No one great family detaches itself from the early mediæval struggle described in the last chapter. Cluny was influential here as elsewhere in France, and Cluny was probably the creative force behind the artistic developments of the province. If so, it proves once again how the Cluniac impetus expressed itself through local conditions and ideas, and how little the monks sought to impose the style or principles of the great mother house in Burgundy. Considerable influence radiated throughout Auvergne from the celebrated Abbey of La Chaise-Dieu. Perched on its eyrie over 5,000 feet high, it is still a very remarkable place, though the present building dates from the fourteenth century, and no trace remains of the earlier Romanesque church. Chaise-Dieu can be seen easily by those who motor between Le Puy and Clermont-Ferrand, and I cannot advise any other method of locomotion in Auvergne.

Clermont-Ferrand, the capital, is a large town situated on a hillock in the centre of a plain. The plain is surrounded on all sides except the north by a ring of hills. These hills

are near enough to be imposing, not near enough to overshadow the town. Very fine views occur in many directions, and the cones of numerous extinct volcanoes can be counted from different vantage-points. Royat, the well-known watering-place, is practically a suburb of Clermont-Ferrand. Springs and baths abound in the locality, but of late years Clermont has acquired new fame as the headquarters of the Michelin tyre industry, which employs many thousand men. A Garden City for Michelin employees now decorates the crest of one hill, a sight sufficiently rare in France to be curious. I listened with great amusement to the views of a shopkeeper in Clermont, who expatiated to me on the benefactions and benevolences of the firm and their prompt and effective way of dealing with strikes. "On ne permet pas ces bêtises là," she remarked. Strikes, I gathered, didn't occur nowadays. The workers found the price too heavy. Clermont has been called the Black City. It is built mostly in grey lava, and in grey weather must look a dreary place. The fine Gothic cathedral stands on the crown of the hill and dominates the whole town. The cathedral is built in the same sombre material as the houses, but the beautiful spires spring upwards as though lifting cathedral and town alike into the sky. An ancient church, consecrated in 946 by Étienne II., stood on this site prior to the introduction of Gothic into Clermont-Ferrand. Excavations prove that it had three naves and an ambulatory with radiating chapels. This building was certainly anterior to Notre Dame du Port, now the oldest Romanesque church remaining in Clermont-Ferrand.

I have already said in Chapter XII. that the type of church generally known as Auvergnat is widespread through Southern and Central France, and may have had as its prototype the famous church of St. Martin of Tours. The term, as we saw, was usually applied to churches with a lofty nave covered by a barrel vault, the main vault being propped by quarter vaults over the side aisles. A triforium gallery with windows opens into the nave, but there is no direct lighting save from windows in the side aisles. A tower is built over the crossing of the transept,

and the church has an ambulatory with radiating chapels. Notre Dame du Port, St. Julien de Brioude, St. Austremoine at Issoire, St. Nectaire, and the fine church at Orcival, all follow this plan. But in Auvergne there is a wide difference between the treatment of the west end of the churches and the tympana in existence elsewhere. The west entrance of an Auvergne church is austere in the extreme. The heavy masonry, bare of all sculpture and decoration, gives no hint of the fine proportions within. Still more striking, perhaps, is the contrast between the west and the east end. The *chevet* is as elaborate as the west front is bare. The west end of Notre Dame du Port looms up like a fortress. But the *chevet* is a miracle of radiating chapels, walls, and roofs, all beautifully decorated and combined into one harmonious whole. I can find very few particulars about Notre Dame du Port. A legendary church founded in the sixth century was destroyed, so it is said, by Normans, on a raiding expedition in flat boats up the Allier, and was rebuilt in the ninth century. The present church is not archaic. It may have been begun early in the twelfth century, but work upon it apparently proceeded slowly, and it was not finished till nearly a hundred years later.

Though not a large church, Notre Dame du Port is a fine example of its kind, and has a sobriety and beauty all its own. The uncompromising west front opens into a narthex also rudely built. Then comes the nave with five bays. Over the transept is a dome on pendentives, which carries an octagonal tower crowned by a short spire. Seen from the outside, the disposition of the *chevet*, though carried out with less elaboration, is very like the east end of St. Sernin at Toulouse. There is the same huge wall of the transept rising above the rounded circle and roof of the choir. Around the choir in turn lies the ring of radiating chapels. At Notre Dame du Port the wall of the transept is decorated with blind arcades. The choir and the radiating chapels are conspicuous for their handsome cornices. Corbel heads, and pilasters, and decorated windows, all go to make a fine effect. A special feature of the churches in Auvergne are the black, white, and red

stones used as a kind of mosaic. This form of decoration was very popular throughout the province, and is used on the transept wall of Notre Dame du Port. As the *chevet* is rich without, so it is equally rich within. The choir is built over a crypt, the plan above and below being identical. The capitals that decorate the eight pillars of the ambulatory are very remarkable. They are a striking instance of the courage shown by the Auvergnat sculptors in attacking complicated figure subjects with a very imperfect technique. The history of the Virgin occupies a column, and that of Zacharias another. The figures have no elegance, but the details are curious and interesting. Angels are frequently introduced, and the sculptor clearly found them attractive as subject-matter. The angel of the Annunciation is a cheerful-looking person, a prosperous peasant from the fields rather than a sublimated messenger from the courts of Heaven. Equally robust is the angel who solves poor Joseph's perplexities in the dream by tugging at his beard. Very curious is the scene representing the resurrection of the Virgin. A bearded Christ lifts a tiny figure, swathed in mummy-like wrappings, from the sarcophagus, while two angels look on, each holding a singing-book in one hand and a censer in the other. The ark of the covenant, as a symbol of the Virgin, and a fine angel with an open book on his knee, complete the picture.

Still ruder, but no less vigorous, is a capital dealing with Adam and Eve. In the first scene they are shown as coarse nudes eating the forbidden fruit with gusto. God, a venerable figure, heavily draped and carrying a large book, calls them subsequently to account. The scene of the expulsion from Paradise is, I am sorry to say, a shameful affair. Some day I hope the feminist movement in France will be sufficiently strong to register a protest against it. Certainly it does no credit to Adam or the angel, who is an accessory to the scene. The unhappy Eve, with one hand to her head, crouches between the angel and her irate husband. Adam has so far forgotten himself that he is kicking her hard with one foot, while he cuffs her about the head with a massive hand. Not a very

pleasant sidelight on conjugal relations in the Garden of Eden as conceived by the Auvergnat sculptors. Finally, a massive angel with a drawn sword is seen guarding the gates of Paradise. Another column has an interesting Psychomachia—the combat of the Virtues and Vices—armed warriors trampling on demons and masks. The two groups are separated by a curious nude figure of Anger plunging a sword in its heart. We are a long way removed here from the beautiful warrior maidens who adorn the portals of Poitou and the Saintonge, but the anachronism of the costumes and the use of current dresses and armour prove that the sculptor was not a copyist but was working from nature. The church contains some foliage capitals, but they cannot compare in beauty and strength with the foliage capitals in Burgundy.

These capitals at Notre Dame du Port probably date from the first quarter of the twelfth century. The name of the sculptor, one Robert, is preserved on a pillar. The figures, as often in Auvergne, are squat and heavy, with heads far too large for the bodies. But, undaunted by a most imperfect technique, the local sculptors did not hesitate to crowd the capitals with figures that atone by their sincerity for what they lack in beauty. The door of the south transept at Notre Dame du Port has a triangular lintel with a tympanum above. The figures were horribly mutilated at the time of the Revolution, but enough remains to show that they proceed from a later and a freer hand than the capitals of the ambulatory. In the tympanum Christ appears surrounded to right and left by six-winged angels. On the lintel are sculpted the Adoration of the Magi and the Presentation in the Temple. These figures have all lost their heads, but the movements are free and gracious. The portal is flanked by two crude and more archaic figures of Isaiah and St. John Baptist. St. John wears a curious tucked tunic.

Clermont-Ferrand is a convenient centre from which to visit most of the principal churches in Auvergne. Issoire at 35 kilometres, St. Nectaire at 62 kilometres, Mozat at 12 kilometres, are all easily accessible. Brioude is rather further afield (68 kilometres), but can be seen on

[*Photo. Edit. Giraudon.*

NOTRE DAME DU PORT: CAPITAL OF PSYCHOMACHIA.

the way to Le Puy. These churches all reproduce, more or less faithfully, the typical plan of the Auvergnat churches —a central nave with a triforium gallery, quarter circle vaults roofing the side aisles, a belfry over the transept, and a *chevet* with radiating chapels. All have historiated capitals, all are more or less ruined by the quite deplorable modern polychromy on every available inch of the surface. In Auvergne I found two new destroying angels to add to my list of bad architects. Mimey and Mallay sound for all the world like a couple of revue artists, but I am afraid any good cheer about them begins and ends with their names. They took the same unpardonable liberties with the churches of Auvergne as Abadie in Périgord, and their evil influence reaches as far as Le Puy. St. Nectaire is a small commune, torn between the conflicting emotions of pride in its church, and anxiety to blossom out in the world as a fashionable watering-place. Adjectives are piled on its waters to this end: "excitantes, toniques, régulatrices, rénovatrices, chlorurées, sodiques, bicarbonnatées." Personally, in spite of such a plethora of liquid virtues, it struck me as a hot little place, tucked away in a narrow valley and offering very few attractions as a holiday resort. The church stands very finely at the head of the valley on a rock that juts up like a pillar. It is of moderate size, though broad in proportion to its length. The *chevet* contains only three radiating chapels, but the short arm of each transept carries an apsidiole. Rather clumsy foliage capitals decorate the pillars in the nave, but at the transept crossing and in the ambulatory are the historiated capitals for which St. Nectaire is famous. An excellent monograph by Monsieur l'Abbé Rochias gives a detailed study of their iconography. It is fully illustrated and can be bought in the church. Monographs by local enthusiasts are apt to be uncritical, but every visitor to Auvergne must be struck by the great similarity of the iconography used in different churches. Scenes from the Passion are common, and especially scenes from the Resurrection. The Holy Women at the Tomb was also a popular theme. Certain decorative motives are repeated constantly, and have more than an echo of classical origin

at a good many removes. Masks and centaurs and syrens appear, and a very curious kneeling figure used at the angle of a capital, holding up its legs which have turned into tresses of arum foliage. Unlike the Abbé Rochias, I cannot place a symbolic interpretation on these fantasies. The long Roman occupation of Auvergne must have left innumerable remains, and masks and syrens and centaurs have a decorative heredity easy enough to trace in such a locality.

Among the interesting capitals at St. Nectaire are the fine group of the Women at the Tomb shown as a Romanesque church with a group of Roman soldiers asleep on the opposite side; and the curious Last Judgment, with a figure of a bearded Saviour holding the reed in one hand and the nails in the other. With Him are two angels holding a splendid Byzantine cross. These figures, with their large heads and hands, are wholly out of proportion with their little squat bodies. On another side of the capital we find a group of damned—all very youthful people, being pushed off to perdition by a consequential-looking angel. Another curious capital dealing with the Last Judgment shows the separation of the Just and Unjust by the angel, and on another face the weighing of the souls by St. Michael. The rider on the White Horse of the Apocalypse, an armed warrior with darts in his hand, is graphically carved. The Gallo-Roman influence is conspicuous in the capital devoted to St. Nectaire. The figures in the ordination of St. Nectaire look like debased Roman rather than Romanesque work.

The capital showing the miracle of the loaves and fishes on one side, and on another side the Transfiguration, repays study; as also the remarkable capital with the Betrayal in the Garden. This capital is really astir. The Roman soldiers bear arms and torches. Jesus is grasped round the neck by Judas, but he leans across the treacherous disciple to replace with a huge hand the ear just severed by Peter from the head of Malchus.*

The Treasure of St. Nectaire is specially fine. The

* Monsieur Paul Bourget has introduced this capital into his story, " Le Chapiteau Roman."

reliquary bust of St. Baudine and the statue of Notre Dame de Mont Cornadore are interesting examples of goldsmiths' work in the round. Small reliquary statues designed for altars were very popular in Auvergne. This province, as we shall see later on at Conques, kept the art of modelling figures in the round when figure sculpture was in abeyance in other parts of France. The remoteness of the province made, as we have seen, for conservatism, and the Gallo-Roman tradition was handed over intact to the mediæval sculptors. Figures of the Madonna, carved in wood and covered with plaques, sometimes of gold and silver, sometimes of copper, are a special feature in Auvergne. Some of these little figures are very beautiful. The Virgin is usually seated on a throne, decorated with arcades, and holds the Holy Child on her knees. Her robe and veil are arranged with great skill in fine folds, carefully studied. There is usually a hole in the back where relics were inserted. There is a fine Virgin of this type in the Museum at Clermont, though the famous Virgin of Clermont has long since disappeared.

The finest of the Auvergne churches, to my way of thinking, is St. Austremoine at Issoire, though it has suffered from the attentions of Mallay and is cruelly disfigured by the most horrible modern polychromy. Hideous red and chocolate decorations shout at you from every arch and column, but this orgy of bad colour cannot destroy the noble proportions of the church itself. St. Austremoine is a larger edition of Notre Dame du Port, but has lost the air of extreme solidity that rather weights down the average Auvergne building. The *chevet*, seen from without, is admirable. Black and white mosaics, and medallions with Signs of the Zodiac, decorate the four apsidioles that encircle a square east end crowned by a gable.

The spacious nave has seven bays, and is covered by a barrel vault with one reinforcing arch. Double trefoil arches, resting on squat columns, lend a very Oriental air to the triforium. No less striking is the dome on squinches above the transept crossing, which springs upwards with a great elaboration of windows, arches, and

columns. The capitals of the nave are mainly foliage, but some typical Auvergne designs also find a place here. The capitals of the ambulatory, however, stand in a class apart. They are not only the finest in Auvergne, but can challenge comparison with the best work elsewhere. Here there is complete emancipation from the large heads and stumpy bodies of Notre Dame du Port and St. Nectaire. The group of Marys at the tomb is one of the most noble examples extant of Romanesque sculpture. The three draped figures bearing spices express an intensity of grief, restrained though it be. They move forward, sorrowful though dignified, to pause astonished at the entrance of the tomb. No less beautiful is the gesture of consolation made by the angel. The Roman guard, wearing chain armour, who sleep with their shields hung up on the wall, are naïve in execution, but we must remember that it is not easy to dispose a group of sleeping men about the face of a capital. Often, I think, the Romanesque sculptor achieves his aim, not through the laws of perspective, but in spite of them. Suggestion and sincerity win the day when technique fails. Another superb capital at Issoire is one of the Last Supper. A table covered by a draped cloth runs round the entire capital. At this Jesus and His disciples are seated. Here again we have the same depth of feeling as marks the Marys at the Tomb. Each Apostle is individual in sentiment and expression. All are moved by some poignant sense of tragedy to come.

Mozat, again, is a very interesting church, and the thirteenth-century châsse of St. Calmin, in champlevé Limoges enamel, is worth a visit alone, apart from any considerations of architecture or sculpture. Syrens and centaurs, mythical beasts and masks, appear in the nave. A nude figure in a helmet, holding up a shield, is an attractive little lady. The capital of the Marys at the Tomb is much praised, but to me it is less fine than the capital at Issoire. The figures are shorter, and have not the same grave elegance as the Issoire Marys. At Mozat you will see a variation of the kneeling man at St. Nectaire holding up his legs. At Mozat the figure is reproduced at each

angle of the capital, but feet and hands touch those of its neighbouring figures, and the arum is introduced as a tuft of fruit held up by the hands. The effect of the linked hands and feet running round the body of the capital is very striking, and, as far as I know, is peculiar to Auvergne.

CHAPTER XVII

LE PUY

Why is not Le Puy, in its beautiful setting of Le Velay, better known? It is without question one of the most romantic and unexpected places not only in France but in Europe. Georges Sand uses a happy phrase in a description of this little district on the outskirts of Auvergne, whose first business it is to inform you that Le Velay has life and character of its own, and has nothing to do with its neighbours. "Ce n'est pas la Suisse," she writes, "c'est moins terrible: ce n'est pas l'Italie, c'est moins beau." Le Velay and Le Puy are just themselves, things unique and apart. Le Velay is an oasis among volcanic mountains. Le Puy, on its rock, is surrounded by country fertile as only volcanic soil can be. The town surges out of the plain and clings to the slopes of a modest hill, known as Mont Anis. But halfway up, the hill grows tired of decorous contours, and flings into the air a huge rock, like a citadel, dominating the town below. Here the dubious piety that manufactures articles of worship from weapons of destruction has created a colossal Virgin, made from the cannon taken at Sebastopol. Meagre though are the artistic merits of the Virgin, the statue adds yet another bizarre touch to one of the strangest landscapes in Europe. The view of Le Puy from the Rocher Corneille, as it is called, is extraordinary. Pinnacles and rocks are thrown about the green plain haphazard. Ancient craters and volcanic strata all point to a violent fatherhood in the remote past. The country is too restless, too unexpected, to be beautiful in any orthodox sense. These are not hills, austere and pure, enfolding weary mankind in a gesture of peace and healing. These little hills have known the baptism of fire, and, if at rest today, have come through torture unspeakable in the past. In the Mirrors of Science and

[*Photo. Edit. Giraudon.*

NOTRE DAME DU PORT : CAPITAL.

Nature, early writers traced a symbolical significance in every animal and plant. If they had studied the rocks, they might have found further symbols to illustrate their oft repeated thesis of the struggle between good and evil. Fire and water have gone to the making of our world, and fire has left an indelible print on Le Puy. But, if fire came first, water has poured healing streams over the rocks and has worked hard to wipe away their scars. The district is full of freaks geographically. Mountains and rivers seem to appear in unexpected places, and the valleys of the Rhone and the Loire approach within bowing distance of each other.

The vivid impression I have of Le Puy is, no doubt, due to the conditions of my first approach. I had come by train from Lyons to St. Étienne, and had left the Rhone Valley on a hot summer afternoon. Between the Loire and the Rhone, the Velay and the Vivarais, lies a hilly country known as Le Migal and Les Boutières. It is not a tourist-haunted district, and for what remained of the day I had a mind to see it more freely than from the window of a railway carriage. Arrived at St. Étienne, I refused, therefore, to travel on to Le Puy by the train due there late at night, and hired a motor-car to drive across the hills. A scandalised porter, who had pressed on me the merits of the railway, saw me into the car with an air of disgust. Judging by his face, I felt I was fortunate to get away without being called upon to listen to some acid remarks about the extravagance of the English and the enormities committed by them owing to the exchange. But I remain entirely impenitent about any financial recklessness involved by that particular motor run. For never was a drive more worth while.

St. Étienne is a large and dirty town of nearly 150,000 inhabitants. Collieries and ribbons are the chief commercial assets of the place, and between them these incongruous bedfellows have created a squalid patch of industrialism amid beautiful surroundings. We set out in the warm summer evening and threaded our way for some time among dingy suburbs and pit-banks, where collieries belched forth smoke unhindered and unreproved. But at last the chim-

neys and dumps were left behind, and we were out once more in high country. For some hours we climbed up and down from range to range and valley to valley. The twilight had long since given place to night—night, lighted by such a moon as I have seldom seen. The hills lay blanched in the unearthly radiance, larger, more mysterious than they would have appeared by day. The watershed we were crossing was nothing remarkable in height, but, in these circumstances, hills assumed the proportions of mountains. By sunlight, no doubt, they were hills and valleys like many others; this night they might have been mountains of the moon tenanted by unearthly beings, or by Pagan gods to whom the Romans once paid worship in Gaul. Now and again we passed a little village deep in sleep; often in the valleys we heard the murmur of water, or the faint rustle of leaves stirred by the breeze, till at last, on one hillside, the driver touched my arm and pointed to a streak of steel far below, shining livid in the moonlight. "Madame, voyez donc la Loire!" France is a large country, but when you have met far away in the west the Loire flowing majestically through Touraine on its way to the sea, to meet it so far south as a brook on the slopes of the Cevennes comes as a surprise to most people. It is one of the curiosities of France that you can in a few hours cross the watershed from the valley of the Rhone, flowing south, to the valley of the Loire, flowing due north.

The Loire runs at a little distance from Le Puy, but its course can be traced from the Rocher Corneille—a gay little stream, unmindful as yet of its future dignities and burthens as the great waterway of Western France. We dropped in broad moonlight from the crest of the last hill into the town of Le Puy, the houses white and silent in that strange glare. The Rocher Corneille loomed up to the right; crowning its summit I knew the colossal statue of the Virgin kept watch over the town. The clatter of the café attached to the hotel was a sharp return to the mundane things of daily life, after the mysterious world of shadow and fancy through which we had driven during the summer night. Splendid sunshine greeted

me next morning, and revealed a new Le Puy. But till my last day I shall be glad that I would have none of the *train omnibus* at St. Étienne and drove over the hills into the Velay.

Le Puy goes back to Roman times, though it is a moot point whether or not an oppidum existed on Mount Anis. Lying to the west of the main route up the Rhone Valley, it was necessarily not a place of the first importance. Thanks to this aloofness, Le Puy has managed very largely to keep intact its own unique individuality. You carry away an impression of red soil, red rocks, and red roofs. The town itself climbs up and down the slopes of Mount Anis, but hills encircle it on every side, and near at hand are the strangest pinnacles, some crowned by churches or statues. For if the Virgin dominates the Rocher Corneille, a statue hardly less colossal decorates the rock of Espaly near at hand, and strangest of all is the pinnacle of St. Michael d'Aiguilhe, with an ancient church on its summit—a miracle of construction in such a place.

Le Puy has been from early Christian times under the special protection of the Virgin, and the cathedral was built to the glory of her name. The famous image of the Black Virgin was destroyed by the revolutionaries, but it was for centuries a venerated object throughout France. During the feasts of the Assumption pilgrims flocked to Le Puy, and tournaments were held in honour of the Virgin, while poets sang her praises. A pretty legend survives of the founding of the first church on Mount Anis. St. George, called to Le Puy in a vision, saw in a dream the ground covered with snow, and a running stag who traced with his hoof the design of the future cathedral. St. George was much too poor to think of building a church, but marked out the plan, miraculously indicated, with a hedge of dry thorns. The next day he returned to find the hedge in full blossom. Later on, in Gallo-Roman times, more miracles and visions took place, and again the Virgin was insistent that a church should be built in her honour. So much for legend. Earlier churches certainly existed on the site of the present Romanesque cathedral, and they in turn probably replaced a Pagan

temple. A striking Gallo-Roman frieze, now in the Museum, was built into the *chevet*, till Mimey thought fit to destroy the east end of the cathedral in 1865—of course in the name of restoration.

My earnest advice to anyone who visits Le Puy is to approach the cathedral for the first time, not by the main west door, but from the porch St. John on the north side. Only thus can you appreciate the real miracle in construction achieved by the mediæval architect. Church builders, during the ages of faith, had an almost uncanny power of dragging material up to the top of peaks and rocks, and creating places of worship in what we consider today impossible conditions. A church built on a hill naturally follows as much as possible the lines of the rock, a plan clearly adapted at Le Puy. The present cathedral was built in stages, beginning with the *chevet*—a little eleventh-century basilica 24 metres long by about 12 wide. Early in the twelfth century the transept and the two side bays of the nave nearest the east end were added; the eleventh-century basilica thus becoming the *chevet* of the enlarged church. Up to this point all was well. But when pilgrimages and pilgrims called for a further enlargement of the church, the problem of space and of foundations must have harassed the architects. The existing rock was covered, and there was no more room for expansion. Therefore, when the next extension became necessary, the only way out of the difficulty was to build over the void and fling four bays into space supported only by the vaults of a massive porch. It will be realised, therefore, that not only is the cathedral of Le Puy built on a hill, but, literally, that it is half hanging in the air. Very few dates are available at Le Puy, and no information about builders and architects. But the *chevet* clearly belonged to the eleventh century, and alterations and additions to the nave were made on three separate occasions during the twelfth century. The fifth and sixth bays were built at the end of the century.

I had not in the least grasped beforehand this extraordinary building plan. No photograph of the cathedral gives you any inkling of it, for such photographs (as I

realised subsequently) are taken from the roofs of neighbouring houses and convey no idea of the height. So I was puzzled to find inside the church that the west end consisted of a wall with windows, and that apparently there was no west door, a strange state of affairs in a Romanesque building. The mystery was explained by a door on the south-west side, leading by a long flight of steps to a porch far below the level of the nave. On the threshold of the porch you are faced by one of the most extraordinary views in Europe. You stand under the floor of the cathedral in an entrance which is unique. The striped black and white façade of the west end with its triangular gables hangs high above you in the air. A great flight of steps falls away from your feet into the rue des Tables far below. The road winds uphill between red-roofed houses, and, perched high in mid-air at the entrance of the cathedral, you look down on Le Puy at your feet set in a splendid panorama of surrounding hills. Europe holds nothing more unexpected or more dramatic than the view from the west porch of Le Puy Cathedral. You will understand why I say come into the church from the north side and make your way in due course to the western entrance below the level of the nave.

To speak now in greater detail of the church. You do not carry away from Le Puy any recollection of a church of special size or of any great ensemble of sculpture. But from no place will you carry away the memory of a building more striking or more original. Le Puy is unique in France. If the scenery is fantastic, so is the cathedral. Like everything else in this strange town, it falls into no recognised plan or school. There are larger and more beautiful churches in France, but there are none more remarkable. The nave is covered, not by a barrel vault, but by a series of beautiful domes on squinches. They are divided one from another by pointed arches carried on pillars with historiated capitals. The side aisles have groined vaults. Of the two ways of carrying a dome, I much prefer the squinch to the pendentive, for it gives you, as at Le Puy, many opportunities for combining columns, windows, and arcades in the decorations of the

vault, instead of the rather dull flap of the pendentive. The cathedral cannot be called Auvergnat; it cannot be called Burgundian. But Burgundian influence makes itself felt at Le Puy in the pointed arches of the nave, as Auvergnat influence is sensible in the decoration of black and white and red mosaics. Again, many similarities have been noted between the domes at Le Puy and those of St. Hilaire at Poitiers. But no one would suggest that Poitevin influence is uppermost at Le Puy. The relationship between the two churches is curious. During the Norman invasions of Poitou the relics of St. Hilaire were sent to Le Puy for safety. With more honesty than many of their fellows, the monks, in due course, restored the relics to St. Hilaire at the end of the eleventh century. An interchange of architectural ideas as well as of relics apparently took place. The domes at Le Puy are more elegant and original than those at Poitiers, but they are probably somewhat later in date. The nave of Notre Dame, with its cupolas and pointed arches, is beautiful and impressive. The decoration and the sculptures are strangely Oriental in feeling. The sense of Arab influence filtered through various sources is very strong. The Infidel had a pretty taste in decoration, and his foliage wreaths and beasts and fanciful script were adapted innocently and unconsciously by Christian sculptors, who found the designs admirable. Thanks to the windows at the west end, the cathedral at Le Puy is always luminous, and at sunset is ablaze with light.

The more I realised the performance of Mimey and Mallay at Le Puy, the more hostile were my sentiments towards those heroes. They must wander in the hell set apart for bad architects very near to Abadie. Mimey destroyed the ancient *chevet* of the cathedral, and replaced it by a modern east end, banal in the extreme. Mallay pulled down the belfry over the transept crossing, and completely altered both height and proportions in his reconstruction. Every part of the cathedral has been pulled about. Personally I do not admire the west front, for striped mosaic is a form of decoration wasted on me. But since the whole façade was taken down and recon-

structed by Mallay, the spruce appearance of having emerged from a box of bricks may be due to him. The octagonal belfry, built originally over the transept crossing, was detached from the building and placed at the east end. It is a solid structure rising in seven stages from a square base. This belfry will certainly not storm the gates of Heaven. It is anchored much too solidly on earth. But, like the façade, the belfry conveys the impression of cubes from a box of bricks, built up by a careful though rather heavy hand. This tower has been rebuilt—in strict conformity with the original design—but no old building is better for the process.

The west porch at Le Puy is very remarkable. It is like a small church itself, but, thanks to its unique level, is neither crypt nor narthex. The great staircase that leads upwards from the rue des Tables did not formerly stop short, as at present, on the threshold of the porch. It was carried right under the church, and emerged in front of the choir. What other church in Europe had an underground entrance at once so unusual and so dramatic? Pilgrims who entered the cathedral would see at the end of the dim stairway all the lights blazing on the High Altar, while the distant music of the choir grew in volume as they approached. Such an entrance was a symbol in itself of passing from the chill and darkness of error into the warmth and light of truth. The impression on great feast days must have been superb, but unfortunately it has been lost to latter-day worshippers. The cathedral has suffered here as elsewhere from the trite minds brought to bear on it when structural repairs have been necessary. Consequently this entrance, unique as other details about Le Puy, was closed in 1781. It is but inadequately replaced by the present staircase, leading to the south-west end of the cathedral, which was built at this date in the angle to the right.

The three bays that compose the porch are built under and correspond with the last bays of the nave of the upper church. An altar stands against the wall that now blocks the east end of the porch. The porch alone must have been an adequate place of worship, for it has side aisles,

as well as a nave, and two chapels fill the third bay on each side. These are closed by two ancient doors with wooden panels, whose carvings and designs are among the most precious relics extant of early Romanesque sculpture. Both doors—especially the north door—are horribly mutilated. The panels to north and south are decorated respectively with scenes from the Nativity and scenes from the Passion, but some of the groups are too battered for analysis. Monsieur Marquet de Vasselot dates these doors between 1050 and 1075.* If so, they are among the earliest examples of French Romanesque sculpture. It is very surprising on the threshold of a Christian church to be met by the statement that there is no god but God, and Mohammed is his prophet. But the supreme interest of the doors lies in their extraordinary border of debased Cufic letters. The sculptor, whoever he was, wanted a suitable frame for his wooden panels and found an Oriental border—perhaps on an ivory casket, perhaps on a silk textile—that suited his purpose. No proof could be more exact of the degree to which Romanesque artists introduced motives from any sources that came to hand and copied and reproduced designs without the smallest regard to their original use or meaning. Arabic lettering is highly decorative, and Christian sculptors who valued its artistic quality never suspected that the handsome borders they admired contained statements of the Infidel's faith drawn from the Koran. At Le Puy the original character of the letters is very difficult to decipher, for they have been altered and adapted to serve the end not of a grammarian but of a sculptor. If Monsieur de Vasselot's view of the age of these doors is correct, an interesting speculation arises as to the place they occupied originally in the church. For the nave of the cathedral and the porch below it were not built till a later date.

The porche du For opens into the arm of the south transept. It is a very early example of Gothic before the new principles have emancipated themselves from the old. The moment of transition is always exciting, and this admirable porch is one of the treasures of Le Puy.

* Michel, " Histoire de l'Art," p. 592.

The roof has ogival vaulting, and two large archivolts frame the entrances to south and north. A very curious feature of this archivolt is a second arch, serving no architectural purpose, which is attached to it by means of three little isolated pilasters. The arches rest on fluted columns with elaborate capitals, and *rosaces* decorate their inner face. Heavy though the walls of the porch, the clustered columns at the angles with their varied designs are elegant as well as imposing. Thanks to the vagaries of the rock, every entrance to the cathedral seems to be at a different level. The porch of St. John on the north-east side is built in part over the public road leading up to the Rocher Corneille. It is entered by a very large flattened arch, with a chapel above opening into the triforium of the transept. Across the road is the ancient baptistery, a rude but interesting building of the eleventh century. Green marble columns with Corinthian capitals, obviously classical or Gallo-Roman in origin, have been built into the apse and carry the arcades of what was once the sanctuary. Unhappily the baptistery is now a forlorn place.

The cloister is tucked away on the north side of the cathedral, between the transept and the west front. It is approached through a tangle of houses, built at all angles on the slope of the hill. Though not the equal of Arles or Moissac, it is a very charming place with some interesting capitals and an exciting cornice, whence all manner of fantastic animals and figures look down as though ready to spring on the visitor. The round arcades are all picked out in black and white marbles, and though rather solid-looking, the clustered columns on which they rest have the characteristic sobriety of Auvergnat art.

Finally, whether or not you have the spirit to climb the Rocher Corneille to its very summit, it is essential to follow the road from the porch of St. John for a certain distance upwards, so as to have the splendid view of the cathedral as a whole against the background of the Velay landscape and the distant hills of the Forez.

Good walkers will not fail to climb the extraordinary needle rock of the Aiguilhe, 83 metre metres high, and

visit the church of St. Michel perched on the summit. A staircase winds up the pinnacle till the rock flattens somewhat at the top, and we come out on a platform in front of the miniature façade. Small it may be, but incomparably rich for its size. A splendid trefoil arch rests on two columns with historiated capitals. The lintel is carved with two affronted syrens, and though there is a plain tympanum, the archivolt surrounding it is wreathed with a band of *rinceaux*. Above this come the recessed lobes of the trefoil arch, each with a group of sculpture illustrating the Apocalypse. In the centre is the Lamb with the sacred animals; to right and left are the Elders. The wall is inlaid with black, white, and red stones forming a mosaic decoration. Under the cornice comes a band of five arcatures. God the Father is shown in the centre with saints to right and left. The trefoil arch below speaks of Arab influence, but the arcatures enclosing heads of saints look like the sides of an ivory casket. Within, the chapel follows the irregularities of the rock, and though it has a nave and vaults, and capitals with acanthus leaves and other floral designs, makes no pretence of being built on any symmetrical plan. It is sadly neglected, and " nom de fou se trouve partout " on the walls and columns of the desecrated sanctuary. Is it because France is so prodigal in creation that she shows at times such indifference about the proper care of her treasures? The piety of a former age raised St. Michel d'Aiguilhe on its pinnacle of rock. The more difficult the enterprise, the greater in the eyes of its builder would be the offering made to God. Our approach to these things is not theirs, we conceive of faith in different terms. But let us at least deal gently with memorials of the past on which humanity in painful letters has written the tale of its own struggles and mistakes. To tear out and deface any page in the book of life is to make the sum total of human experience less worth while and less complete. So to act is to degrade the present and dishonour the future.

CHAPTER XVIII

CONQUES

Conques is one of the most inaccessible places in France. A vague branch line, itself a bifurcation at several removes from the main line, approaches within 18 kilometres of it, and occasional trains meander, I conclude, along these bypaths. But, judging from the timetable, they seem to go from nowhere to nowhere and stop nowhere on the way. With the main line Conques has not the most distant bowing acquaintance. Further, any express which approaches within 100 kilometres of it arrives from Paris apparently in the middle of the night. Neither, if you have a motor-car, does Conques lend itself to any easy combinations between place and place. It backs, so to speak, on to the western side of the Massif Central, and refuses to be " worked in " with the lairs of other desirable lions. The position is complicated by the fact of indifferent inns at more than one place relatively near at hand. No, Conques declares she must be loved for herself, and herself alone, and, after all, she has a great deal of justification for taking up that position. Personally I travelled from London to Toulouse, from Toulouse to Albi, and from Albi to Rodez to visit a church whose remoteness had baffled me on more than one occasion. Albi is one of the most remarkable places in France, with its vast red church that looms up like a fortress rather than a house of God. Rodez, superbly situated on a hill among hills, is dominated by a cathedral like a couchant lion. So, if you give yourself up to the Conques pilgrimage, you will be rewarded richly for your trouble.

It is an enchanting drive from Rodez to Conques, a distance of about 36 kilometres. Though the Aveyron looks very hilly on the map, you are in fact on a high tableland with a road that winds up and down among

the folds. The way to Conques lies along a series of valleys, where little rivers prattle down from the hills. The course of the Dourdon is followed for some distance, and near Conques a miniature gorge is entered at a point guarded by a romantic-looking old mill. I had left Albi on a wet spring morning, but the weather had cleared up, and sheets of forget-me-nots, orchids, iris, and violets were sunning themselves along the roadside. Cherry trees, apple trees in blossom, and poplars (whose first yellow leaves look like a martyr's palm) hung on the hillside. I began to think that the holy men who had first sought out this solitude were to be congratulated on their taste. The valley of the Dourdon gets narrower and narrower, and, as it contracts, you begin to ask yourself where there can possibly be room for a big church. This question does not grow less insistent when the road takes a sharp turn to the right up a valley still more narrow and still more overhung by rocks. A little stream, the Louche, forces its way through this ravine, and suddenly, in an amphitheatre of rocks, you see Conques above you, hanging on precariously by its eyelids to the crest of the hill. Conques, as I have shown, is not easy of access today. How was it possible in the twelfth century to drag materials up the narrow valley of the Dourdon and build such a church in such a place ? How did the resources of life among the barren *causses* of the Aveyron support a large monastic establishment of several hundred monks ?

Be that as it may, Conques is one of the most ancient religious foundations in France. There is a legend that as early as the fourth century, hermits had established themselves in these solitudes, but there is no evidence in support of it. The first church at Conques was built towards the end of the eighth century by Dodon, a warrior turned monk. For some reason the Carolingian kings took a special interest in this remote foundation and showed it much favour. Then in the ninth century the relics of Ste. Foy appear on the scene, and again we have one of those tales of theft and fraud that strike so strange a note in the records of the time.

Ste. Foy was a young girl who had been martyred at

Agen in the fourth century. Wonderful tales reached Conques of the miracles wrought by her relics, and excited the cupidity of the monks. A deliberate and bare-faced plan was worked out for their theft. One of the brothers went to Agen and begged for admission to the monastery there. Time was not of much importance, and the scamp was prepared to play a waiting game. So skilfully did he impose on his hosts, that at the end of ten years he was appointed guardian of the saint's relics. One fine day he broke open the tomb and decamped with its contents to Conques. The principle of the validity of the sacrament not being impaired by the unworthiness of the priest seems to have held good over relics. In our present phraseology, the monastery at Conques got away with it. The miracles wrought by Ste. Foy at her new resting-place were as remarkable as those at Agen. Instead of crying shame on the theft, pilgrims by thousands found their way up the ravine of the Dourdon, and France rang with tales of the marvels which took place there. Naturally the monastery waxed rich with the offerings of the faithful, and it became necessary to build a large church to accommodate the crowds. The present church, dedicated to Ste. Foy, was begun by Abbot Odalric about 1030, and was finished thirty or forty years later. It was admirably restored by Formigé in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, and is a remarkable and perfect example today of early Romanesque architecture.

Fine though the church, the special distinction of Conques lies in its wonderful, indeed unique, Treasure. Very few churches have kept a whole series of splendid objects intact through the revolutionary period. But at Conques the inhabitants rose to the occasion nobly. On hearing that the agents of the Convention were on their way to seize the works of art, they entered into a pious and most successful conspiracy, played the part of thieves themselves, broke into the sacristy, and carried off the Treasure under the nose of the sequestrators. The revolutionaries arrived to find the cupboard bare. When happier days returned, the different objects were restored to the church by the loyal inhabitants, among whom they had been

distributed for safe keeping. The latter-day affairs of Conques have taken an unexpected turn. The abbey was closed at the time of the Revolution, but its ancient religious life has been revived in our time. A community of Premonstratensians was established in 1873. The church was restored, the Treasure admirably housed, finally the pilgrimage revived. Conques is a poor little village, whose houses, with mixed equipments of hens and middens, crowd round the abbey. The space in front of the church is rather like a farmyard. But the church itself is in perfect order, and shows every sign of care.

Conques falls into a list of churches in the centre of France, but it is a place where different influences meet architecturally as geographically. Architecturally, Ste. Foy stands halfway between the School of Toulouse and the School of Auvergne. I have already referred to its close kinship with St. Sernin. It is only half the size of St. Sernin—50 instead of 110 metres long, and has a nave with single instead of double aisles. But both churches have the same lofty nave with a triforium gallery, the same large transept with side aisles, the same radiating chapels round the apse, the same construction of vaults, the same central cupola surmounted by a tower, the same type of façade with a tympanum between two towers. And both are marked by the sobriety and calm beauty of that group of great buildings, deriving, so it is thought, from the vanished church of St. Martin at Tours. The proportions of Ste. Foy are very fine, but there are not so many sculptured capitals as in Toulouse or Burgundy. Over the crossing are two very attractive angels. The influence of Auvergne shows itself in the solidity of the sculptures and the triangular-shaped lintel of the tympanum. The portal was executed about the middle of the twelfth century, when the Last Judgment, as a theme, supersedes the Vision of the Apocalypse (as at Moissac) or the Ascension (as at Toulouse).

The tympanum at Conques is one of the great works of art of the twelfth century, and presents us with a unique page in mediæval sculpture. For personally I am convinced that a most unusual element of fun enters into

many of the details. Christ in Glory, a noble figure, sits in the centre of the tympanum. One hand is raised in blessing on the side of the elect, the other is held downwards over the damned. Above Him rises the Cross, while angels descend from Heaven, some holding the instruments of the Passion, others calling mankind to judgment with their long trumpets. Two delightful angels hold lighted candles in a candlestick at His feet. Angels with books and banners recall similar figures at Notre Dame du Port. On the right of the Saviour a procession of people advances led by the Virgin and St. Peter, among them a saint, a bishop, and a king, possibly Charlemagne, who was always claimed as a benefactor of the church. To the left angels bar the gates of Heaven against a company of demons and damned. The lintel below, divided into two triangles, is filled with a diversity of people and scenes. Exactly under the figure of the Saviour, St. Michael is seen (as at Autun) defeating the devil over the weighing of souls. To the left virgins and prophets are seated under the arcades of the new Jerusalem, and Abraham sits, as at Moissac, with the newborn souls in his lap. To the right demons are holding their customary revels with the damned.

But, though this iconography follows common form, did the sculptor himself take it quite seriously? The cunning fellow with great skill has made the apparatus of Hell slightly ridiculous. It is all done in correct and seemly fashion, but we catch the echo of a laugh. The personages on the tympanum at Conques are robust and cheerful folk. St. Peter, the saint, the bishop, are merely good-tempered local types translated into stone. The plump and comely saints and angels are very like the people of the countryside. Good food and good drink would count for much with them all. The devils are engaged in operations more farcical than real. Leviathan appears here as at Autun, a vast monster into whose mouth a comic lost soul is being popped by a group of busy demons. At Moissac and at Autun there is no question of anything funny. They are great and sombre compositions, full to this day of poignant feeling. But, at

Conques, a spirit of irresistible cheerfulness peeps through the scenes of the portal. Hell has been turned into a tragi-comic place, and devils and damned alike are local actors, playing their part in some popular mystery, knowing full well that when the play is over they will have to stand the fire of criticism and witticism from their near neighbours.

Ste. Foy was a youthful saint whose power was specially manifested in setting captives free. Many prisoners, on release, brought their chains as offerings to Conques. A charming little group on the lintel shows the church, with chains hung *ex voto*, and in front of it Ste. Foy is seen on her knees blessed by a divine hand emerging from a cloud. Considerable traces of polychromy remain on the tympanum and add to the general air of cheerfulness. These groups of blessed and damned have not the grace of the Toulouse sculptures. We miss the elongated figures with their flowing robes and extraordinary air of distinction. The art of Auvergne is more solid and more homely; and Conques derives in sculpture from Auvergne, if in architecture it is influenced by Languedoc.

This noble church, so great a monument in its remote valley to the faith and piety of a bygone age, lay on one of the roads to Compostela, and the worship of Ste. Foy formed part of the pilgrimage journey to the shrine of St. James. How crowds of pilgrims were fed and lodged among these hills and ravines is a mystery I cannot pretend to solve, but the magnificence of the Treasure still happily preserved at Conques proves in what veneration the abbey was held. It ranks with the Treasure at St. Maurice d'Agaune in the Rhone Valley, as one of the most remarkable collections extant of early and mediæval goldsmiths' work. These precious works of art have mercifully survived an extraordinary chapter of vicissitudes, and, today as in the eleventh century, are the pride and glory of Conques. Among many famous objects, the most celebrated is the statue of Ste. Foy in gold, studded with precious stones.

Goldsmiths, rather than sculptors, were first on the field, when the revival of sculpture in the round took place

during the early days of the Middle Ages. Reliquary statues in wood, covered with plates of gold or less precious metal, made their appearance as objects of worship. It is suggestive that these reliquary statues were common in the centre of France, where the Gallo-Roman tradition of sculpture in the round had persisted though lost elsewhere. Reference has already been made to the reliquary bust of St. Baudine at St. Nectaire, and to the wooden virgins still preserved in Auvergne. Further, in a country of hard stone and granite, sculptors had little suitable material to work on, and metal images came to the fore instead.

The abbey at Conques was rich enough to have its own *atelier* for goldsmiths' work, and the famous gold statue of Ste. Foy, known as Majesté d'Or—the Golden Majesty—was made there probably about the year 990. It is an extraordinary object, glistening with jewels. The saint sits on a throne, a rigid, hieratical figure. She wears a very ancient form of crown, and her robe is literally stiff with emeralds, pearls, sapphires, amethysts, and other jewels, as well as enamels, cameos, cabochons, and intaglios. The arms are held out rigidly in front of her, each hand carrying a tube like a cigarette-holder for flowers. Bulging eyes, in enamel, look fixedly out of this strange countenance. Colossal feet, resting squarely on a footstool, add the final touch of grotesqueness to the saint's appearance. The piety of successive generations has piled one object after another on the figure. A plaque of the eighth or ninth century covers her back, the thirteenth century added the reliquary on her breast; each generation vied in adding precious stones to the overladen relic. The effect is astounding, though not beautiful. "Ne pouvant la faire belle, l'artiste l'avait fait si riche qu'elle inspirait un religieux effroi," writes Monsieur Mâle.

But, grotesque or not, the Majesté d'Or of Ste. Foy was one of the most venerated objects of the Middle Ages. The supreme possession of Conques did not always stay at home. When disputes or difficulties arose in the neighbourhood, the sacred image was mounted on a horse and taken in procession to the scene of the dispute. Wherever

she went, miracles and cures marked her path. A very curious story is preserved of the adventures of two Angevin clerks, Bernard and Bernier, who visited Conques early in the eleventh century. Bernard, a man of the north, was shocked by the worship paid to the statue of Ste. Foy. Such adoration smacked to him of pure idolatry, and Bernier shared his sentiments. Both young men exhausted themselves in sarcasm about the ignorance of the crowds prostrating themselves before the holy image. "Que te semble frère de cette idole?" said one to the other. "Jupiter ou Mars ne se seraient-ils pas accommodés d'une pareille statue?" And they go on to say that under no pretext ought statues dedicated to saints to be tolerated. Painting was permissible in churches, but images, no. Here we have a striking example of the Puritan anti-anthropomorphic spirit, always present in the Church from the earliest days, and the hostility shown by some people to statuary as too suggestive of Pagan idols. However, the rest of the tale is no less suggestive of a change of values about statuary already in the air. Ste. Foy was not disposed to tolerate unpunished the insolent criticisms of the two sceptical youths. The outraged Majesté fell upon them with a rod and administered a beating—nearly mortal in its severity. Bernard recanted without more ado. He confessed his error, and proclaimed that there was no question of "une statue immonde," but "une commémoration pieuse de la sainte."*

It is pleasant to think that the relics of Ste. Foy found in 1875 and taken to Rodez were solemnly restored to Conques in 1878, and that the statue once more fulfils its original purpose. The Treasure at Conques is admirably housed in a strong room built especially for the purpose in 1911 by the Ministry of Beaux Arts. Here this wonderful collection can be seen to the best advantage in very different circumstances from the dim light of the ordinary sacristy. The most ancient piece in the collection is a ninth-century reliquary attributed to the time of Pepin, son of Louis le Débonnaire. It is a gold coffer, richly decorated with cabochons and intaglios. In the middle of the coffer

* Michel, "Histoire de l'Art," p. 592.

Christ hangs on the Cross between the Virgin and St. John. The Cross has a filigree border set with pearls. The same border surrounds images of the sun and the moon on the lid, and is carried round three arcades which decorate the reverse side of the coffer. The lid above the arcade has two fine affronted eagles. The medallion of a saint appears on each end of the coffer. The statue of Ste. Foy comes next in date: then we have an eleventh century reliquary given by Pascal II. to Begon III., Abbot of Conques, and a curious portable altar in porphyry, belonging to the same abbot. A portable altar, however constructed, had to fulfil two essential conditions: it must always embody a piece of stone blessed by a bishop, it must always contain relics. The usual practice was to seal up relics in a stone in the centre of the altar so that the chalice rested on it when Mass was said. At Conques this porphyry slab is framed in silver with a filigree border. The sides of the altar are decorated with silver plaques, on which heads of saints appear under arcades. Reliquaries, monstrances, pyxes, statuettes, crosses, covers of evangels, phylacteries, these, and other works of art from the ninth to the sixteenth century, are to be found in this incomparable Treasure at Conques. Amid wealth so great, it is only possible, without being wearisome, to point out one or two objects of special interest.

A curious object, known as the A of Charlemagne, recalls a legend circulated with great assiduity by the monasteries of Aquitaine and the centre of France. The story was to the effect that Charlemagne at his death left to twenty-four great abbeys of his empire, twenty-four letters of the alphabet, each a precious piece of goldsmiths' work. It was claimed that the letter A preserved at Conques was the posthumous gift of the emperor and a genuine piece of ninth-century work. Unfortunately the story of Charlemagne's alphabet is apocryphal, and was manufactured by the monks to assert the superiority of their monastery. People who did not hesitate to steal relics would not be hampered by any strict regard for accuracy where a pious legend was concerned advantageous to their community. The A at Conques consists

of an oak core covered by plaques of *vermeil* decorated with filigree work, cabochons, and precious stones. It is dated at the end of the eleventh century, and possibly hung from a crucifix as a pendant to an omega. Very interesting, too, is the twelfth-century leather coffer with enamel plaques, that came to light in 1875 during the restoration of the church. The coffer was discovered buried under a wall, and, when opened, was found to contain the bones of Ste. Foy. At least, phylacteries among the contents of the box, and the declaration of two medical men that the bones were those of a young girl of fifteen, led to that conclusion. The leather cover is studded with silver nails, and the thirty-one enamel discs in champlevé on a gold foundation are decorated with fantastic animals, birds devouring fish, gryphons, and affronted birds. A fine piece of Oriental silk, found in the coffer, now lines the modern reliquary above the High Altar where the bones have been placed.

Remote though Conques may be, it is still a place of worship, neither desecrated nor deserted like many great churches in France. Its treasures are guarded today with intelligence as well as reverence, and all men and women of goodwill, to whatever form of faith they subscribe, can surely rejoice that after many vicissitudes the chain of Catholic tradition has been reknit in the venerable abbey, sanctified by the prayers of a thousand years.

PART V

POITOU AND AQUITAINE

CHAPTER XIX

POITOU AND THE PLANTAGENETS

The Romanesque churches of the west, though all members of the same great family that we have met in Burgundy, Languedoc, and the centre of France, have marked features of their own. The whole background is different, and some account of the historical influences is necessary to place these churches in their proper setting. This can be done only on broad lines, for though in no part of France is there a greater wealth of Romanesque churches, nor does the style attain more beautiful or more varied forms, in no part of France does the personal factor elude us more completely. Only here and there the figure of a great builder is dimly visible. One beautiful church may be visited after another, but more often than not the records are silent about the personalities to whose instinct for praise and prayer the stones bear a mute witness.

The more necessary is it, therefore, to sketch these general conditions of the west, which, less romantic than those of the south and of Burgundy, concerned people of considerable importance in their day.

The geographical limits of the Romanesque School in the west are not easy to determine. Broadly speaking, they fall within the boundaries of the ancient dukedom of Aquitaine. This vast province, lying between the Garonne and the Loire, played no small part at one moment in English history. Poitou, the Saintonge, and the Angoumois in the north have all remarkable churches, but on the east Aquitaine was bounded by Périgord and the Limousin, which also come into the story. For here we find a curious belt stretching from Périgueux to Saintes via Angoulême, with a series of domed churches, special to this part of France. Poitou is without question the most important centre in the west, though archæologists

have differed as to the limits of its influence. Monsieur de Lasteyrie applies the broad term Poitevin School to the whole region between Pau and the south bank of the Loire, though there are many local variations in its expression. I am content to tread in his footsteps and adopt the same term.

Let us glance first at the geography—always a key to history.

In the middle of France, let me remind you, stands the Massif Central, and this great plateau falls by steps and stages into the plain that borders the Atlantic. Much delightful and varied scenery is to be found even on the lower steps of the descent, but as the coast is approached we enter the district of the Bocage, great fertile plains, once marsh, but now reclaimed for cultivation. In Roman times the marshes stretched thirty miles inland, but the industry of the French has reclaimed them for agriculture. In Poitou and Saintonge green fields divided by hedges give the landscape a homelike aspect to the English eye. It is all green and fertile and beautiful, and perhaps a little monotonous—like a pretty woman who goes on smiling but has nothing much to her except the smile. Here and there an old farm with walls and a tourelle suggests earlier and more insecure days. But there is little in the fertile pastures of the Vendée to recall the tragic associations of its past. It is a country of great agricultural wealth, and has been so from early times. Though Athens is an outstanding example to the contrary, generally speaking, fine architecture does not develop in a poverty-stricken district. In the Middle Ages the *bétail* and the *blé* of Poitou, together with certain metalliferous mines, provided the economic foundations of its prosperity and culture. The coast is dangerous, and the harbours, with the exception of La Rochelle and Bordeaux, are negligible. No sailor could wish to toy on such a shore with the angry moods of the Bay of Biscay. Maritime affairs, therefore, have not entered largely into Poitevin life.

Quiet and peaceful though the country looks today, few parts of France have been more soaked in blood. Poitou was a cockpit in ancient and mediæval times. Subse-

quently, the wars of religion raged with special fury in the west, and the Revolution filled up a very cup of horrors. However little the average Englishman may read French history, he has sinister associations with the words La Vendée.

Remarkable though are the churches of the west, I must own that for me, at least, the country between the Garonne and the Loire lacks the haunting charm of other parts of France. In Burgundy, in Provence, in the beautiful valleys of the Tarn, the Lot, and the Dordogne, there is many a spot where I would gladly pitch my wandering tent. It is not easy to put into words why the territories of the old duchy of Aquitaine make less appeal. There is some quiet and gracious scenery in the two departments of the Charente, and both Angoulême and Poitiers—Angoulême in particular—stand nobly, each on its tiny acropolis rising out of the plain. But, taken as a whole, individuality seems to be swallowed up a little in the long succession of field and forest, a verdant carpet that unrolls itself mile after mile—"Annihilating all that's made To a green thought in a green shade."

But historically Poitou is full of interest for the English traveller. Here he or she should feel in a special sense at home, for the principal actors during the Middle Ages are our own Plantagenet kings. Across the background of twelfth-century Romanesque architecture flit such great and turbulent ghosts as Henry II., his wife Eleanor of Aquitaine—by turn Duchess of Aquitaine, Queen of France, and Queen of England; Richard of the Lion Heart, gallant and inconsequent; John Lackland, a craven king, only capable of throwing away what his ancestors had won; then, a hundred years later, another group of royal shadows: Edward III., something of a *faux bonhomme*, though an able and sagacious monarch; and that darling of the popular imagination, whose claim on English hearts as heir-apparent has known no challenge till our own days—Edward, the Black Prince.

What astonishing campaigns these people waged with the limited resources of six centuries ago! Few things are more surprising in the highways and byways of France

than the traces of English invasion and occupation during the Middle Ages. On many occasions when the motor-car, at the end of a long day, has brought me to some small and apparently remote place, I have read with surprise in the guide book that, some six centuries since, it was taken and sacked by the English. These little towns are not particularly accessible today. How English fighting men, ages since, could be transported, munitioned, and fed in the heart of a hostile country, seems a surprising feat for the general staffs of the twelfth and fourteenth centuries. Such a query, of course, raises the still deeper mystery of the Crusades, and the organisation, however primitive, of the vast crowds of adventurers and enthusiasts who hurled themselves across Europe. As for the Black Prince, he appears to have covered a surprising amount of ground in his raids on French towns. His headquarters at Bordeaux provided him with a base in the south. But we find the prince in person, or forces under his command, pouncing on places so widely separated one from another as Carcassonne in Languedoc, and Saulieu in Burgundy. The famous battle of Poitiers was fought as the result of a drive northwards from Bordeaux to Normandy—an audacious plan crowned by brilliant victory. Spasmodic though the appearances made by the English in other parts of France, in Aquitaine and Poitou they are at home, thanks to the great duchy that passed into Plantagenet hands through the marriage of Eleanor of Aquitaine with Henry II. Strongly entrenched in the west, the English must have been a terrible thorn in the flesh of the ruling family in Paris, and at one moment the King of France cut a poor figure in his own country as compared with the King of England.

The architectural wealth of Poitou was rooted in a civilisation already old when the Plantagenets appear on the scene. Gaul, need I repeat, was the oldest and best loved child of the Imperial Family. Roman culture, Roman letters, Roman art, flourished here in a genial soil. When the empire fell, France became, in a special sense, the direct inheritor of its genius and tradition. The great centres of Roman influence in Gaul became centres of

culture and influence during the Middle Ages. The Latin tradition, submerged by centuries of barbarism in England, was never lost in France, and in spite of bloodshed and upheaval and broken links in the chain, France has in the main preserved an unbroken tradition from Gallo-Roman days to our own.

Rome had established herself in strength in the west of France. The cities of Poitiers, Saintes, and Angoulême were not only fortified places in Roman times, but, thanks to the Pax Romana, centres of culture and learning. Indifferent though the harbours were facing the Bay of Biscay, maritime communications in Gaul were not overlooked by those directing the fortunes of the empire. Four main Roman roads crossed the province, among them the great Roman road from Bourges to Bordeaux by Confolens. This great artery came from the Rhine, and was the main diagonal for Roman traffic across Gaul. It crossed the Theodosian Way from Saintes to Poitiers at Aulnay, and was to become some centuries later one of the famous pilgrimage routes to Compostela. Poitiers, the Roman Limonum, was, like Angoulême, marked out by nature to be a fortified place. Both cities stand on a natural platform of rock rising out of the plain, with rivers at its base. It is unnecessary to stress the strategic importance of such natural advantages.

Both agricultural and mineral wealth went to the making of Poitou's prosperity in Roman times. Amenities of life were soon developed, and its school of rhetoric and poetry became famous in Gaul. Christianity, from the third century onwards, made ardent converts in this part of France. Poitiers still venerates the memory of St. Hilaire, champion of orthodoxy and Bishop of Poitiers, whose name is preserved in the remarkable church raised in his honour. But St. Hilaire, a cultured statesman of noble birth, was to see his fame eclipsed by a rough legionary who had spent many years on the frontiers of Gaul when serving in the Imperial Guard. Filled with fervour for the faith, the future St. Martin of Tours came to Poitiers about 360 to visit St. Hilaire and to sue humbly for admission to the priesthood. A Pannonian born in

Hungary and a rude, unlettered man, few contrasts could have been greater than that presented by the converted soldier and the cultured bishop. Encouraged by St. Hilaire St. Martin entered the Church. At first his whole desire was for a life of prayer and penance. At Ligugé, near Poitiers, he founded the first anchorite settlement in France where ascetics lived in separate cells. But the needs of the infant church drew him back into the main current of life. From Poitou St. Martin went to Tours, there to hold the office of bishop for twenty-six years, and to carry on his great campagin against Paganism in the west.

It is curious to find that there were close ties between Poitou and Ireland during the early Middle Ages, ties that are relevant to the speculations discussed on page 29. Ireland, unfortunately for herself, missed the first four centuries of Christianity and the inestimable blessing of contact with Imperial Rome. But Aquitaine and Poitou remained centres of Christian and Roman culture during the growing barbarity of the Merovingian period. The memory of the two great saints, St. Hilaire and St. Martin, brought a crowd of pilgrims, including pilgrims from Ireland, to both Tours and Poitiers. Commercial relations between Ireland and Poitou existed in the days of St. Patrick, and all the world over trade and missionaries have gone hand in hand. For nearly 200 years, till the end of the sixth century, Poitou helped to form Irish Christianity and culture. Intercourse between the two countries was interrupted by the growing barbarism of the seventh and eighth centuries on the Continent. Then Ireland takes up the running, and the Irish missions repaid to Europe a debt contracted earlier in Western France. Missionary journeys were made to Ireland by Poitevin prelates. When the young King Dagobert was ousted from his throne in 651 by an ambitious Mayor of the Palace, it was to Ireland that Bishop Dido of Poitiers sent the boy for safety, and it was in an Irish monastery that he took the tonsure. Trade between the two countries was brisk. The port of Noirmoutier was frequented by English, Irish, and Northmen. There the Irish bartered fish, salt beef, skins, and wheat, against the wine and

other products of France. Merchants from Gaul brought wine to the famous monastery of Clonmacnoise. Intellectual, religious, and economic relations between Ireland and Aquitaine grew feebler, and came to an end in the course of the ninth and tenth centuries. The ocean, beset by pirates, was no longer safe for trade or pilgrims. Nantes, Poitiers, Noirmoutier, Saintes, Angoulême, Bordeaux, were all looted. Ireland herself suffered heavily from Danish pirates. The chain was broken, and it was not till the sixteenth century that the links between Ireland and Poitou were again intimate.

The Roman Empire gave to Poitiers, as elsewhere, some 400 years of relative peace. Its fall was succeeded by 500 years of chaos. Visigoths in the south, Franks in the north, struggled for control of the dismembered fragments that fell from the imperial table. Poitou, then and later, was the theatre of more than physical struggle. Here, where the Langue d'Œil and the Langue d'Oc met in a disputed march, ideas were in conflict no less than territorial ambitions. The Visigoths were Arians, but the Poitevins, ardent Catholics, flung their influence on the side of the Franks. Poitiers was the scene of Clovis' great victory over Alaric in A.D. 507. Did not a ball of fire rising out of the church of St. Hilaire come to stand above the camp of Clovis on the eve of victory? Perhaps Poitou made a bad bargain on that occasion: anyway the country was doomed to suffer 200 years of anarchy and despotism under the Franks. Towards the end of the eighth century, a dukedom of Aquitaine begins to emerge from the welter, and better days are at hand. By the tenth century Poitou has thrown off the yoke of the Carolingians and has become one of the first feudal states in France.

In other parts of France we have seen the influence of the semi-royal houses who ruled over different provinces. In Poitou this rôle was filled by the Guilhems, whose dynasty ruled Poitiers for 133 years, from the end of the tenth century to the first quarter of the twelfth. Aquitaine had two capitals, Bordeaux and Poitiers, and the Guilhems were overlords from the Loire to the Pyrenees.

Poitevin writers claim that, during the ages of confusion,

Poitou preserved more culture than any other part of France. They point to such an institution as the Truce of God as a proof of manners less brutal than those of their neighbours. I have already mentioned Queen Eleanor's grandfather, Duke William of Aquitaine, who was known as the first of the troubadours.* The Guilhems in their time were undoubtedly powerful and successful people, but, though great soldiers, they were not great statesmen. They do not impress us like the counts of Toulouse or the dukes of Burgundy. Their duchy was not stable. They raised a showy superstructure on insecure foundations, and it crashed in the hour of testing. The humdrum but necessary things of government were neglected. Central administration, courts of justice, and regular methods of taxation did not exist. Though heavily involved—as men of their type would be—in the Crusades, the country was neglected while the dukes concerned themselves with the Holy Sepulchre. The Church stepped in to make good the deficiencies of the rulers—like many violent people, the Guilhems were fervent in the practice of public worship, and Cluny laid a strong hand on the province early in the eleventh century. St. Bernard, needless to say, found occasion for correction and reproof in Poitiers as elsewhere. The Benedictines not only built churches, but rendered a great public service by draining the marshes. One way or another the province grew in wealth. Agriculture flourished under various forms. Quarries, salt mines, tanneries, forges, added their quota to the general prosperity. Letters, science, and art revived under a rule relatively mild. From our vantage-point of today we may realise the inherent weakness of Aquitaine, but when the Plantagenets first cast eyes on the duchy, it must have seemed to them a prize splendid beyond compare.

The coming of the Plantagenets to Poitou was as follows:

In 1137 the troubadour duke laid down his pomp, and died shortly afterwards when on pilgrimage at Compostela. An edifying end might be very desirable for a prince whose vices were notorious, but unfortunately he left no male

* See p. 195.

heir to inherit his vast domains. They passed, therefore, to his granddaughter Eleanor, who at the age of fifteen had been married to Louis VII. of France. It was not a happy union. An able and imperious girl married to a king "more monk than monarch," to use the contemptuous words of his young wife, was not likely to be satisfied with life at a court as dull and as pious as that of Paris. Eleanor could not forget—or let her husband forget—that she was in her own right one of the greatest territorial rulers in Europe. Sympathy between the pair was impossible, and the marriage from the first was ill-starred. Though the authority of the Church was at its highest, and the terrors of the priestly arm very real, the private life of the same princes who built abbeys was often marked by great licentiousness. Eleanor of Aquitaine was a very remarkable woman, with passions as violent as her intellect was clear—contradictory qualities that marked her second husband in yet higher degree. A wife more unsuited for a pious and vacillating man like Louis VII. it would be hard to imagine. The Second Crusade preached by St. Bernard must have offered the young woman a welcome channel of escape from the uncongenial life of a dull court. As we saw in Chapter VIII, Eleanor, as well as her husband, took the Cross at Vézelay from the hands of St. Bernard, and set out subsequently to the Holy Land in 1147.

There matters came to a crisis between the king and herself. The Crusade proved one long disaster for the French forces, and to discredit in arms was added bitter personal humiliation. If the king was a poor sort of man, other Crusaders were made of different mettle. A beautiful and high-spirited young woman did not languish unnoticed, either by Christians or Infidels. Antioch rang with the scandal of Eleanor's infidelities and amours. . . .

Suger, the good genius of both Louis VI. and Louis VII., patched up an uneasy truce between the royal pair, but after his death in 1152 no one was at hand to restrain the king from the greatest political mistake of his life. Eleanor was divorced, and retired to her own duchy of Aquitaine, leaving a dismembered France as a legacy to her despised husband. Worse was to follow. Within two

months she married a man of very different temper, Henry Plantagenet, Duke of Normandy and Count of Anjou, rival and enemy of the husband she had cast off with so vast a sense of relief. Two years later the new bridegroom ascended the throne of England as Henry II.

The great figure of Henry Plantagenet wholly transcends these pages. But he dominates the story of twelfth-century Aquitaine as he dominates the contemporary history of England. Bishop Stubbs has left us a matchless analysis of the man, with an analysis no less thorough of the faults and qualities of his race. "Eminently wise and brave, eminently cruel, lascivious, greedy, and false, and eminently unfortunate also, if the ruin of all the selfish aims of his sagacious plans, the disappointment of his affections, and the sense of having lost his soul for nothing can be called misfortune," writes the bishop in his remarkable study.* Henry was not heroic in appearance—a man of middle height, red-haired, with a bull neck and broad, square chest. But his face is described as lion-like, and his grey eyes full of authority. A great hunter and hawker, careless about dress, indifferent about food, and subject to paroxysms of rage, he was nevertheless one of the greatest kings England has had. To Henry II. we owe what is after all the basis of all orderly life, the foundations of English Law, and it is one of the paradoxes of history that this same lawgiver, when in a temper, would roll screaming with rage on the ground, and bite the rushes strewn on the floor. In strength of character and violence of temper, the king was well matched by his wife. The marriage, when it took place, must have worn an eccentric air, for Henry was eighteen and Eleanor thirty. Yet these strange and masterful beings seem to have brought affection to the bargain, and for twenty years they lived together on friendly terms. Eleanor became the mother of eight children, and the firm hand of Henry brought prosperity to Aquitaine. Both Eleanor and Henry encouraged church building, and in the cathedral at Poitiers husband and wife as pious donors kneel before the Saviour in the splendid window of the Crucifixion.

* "Historical Introductions to the Rolls Series," p. 92.

The Plantagenet king ruled from the Pyrenees to the Tweed, and so great was his power, that at one moment it looked as though the Capetian monarchy would be swallowed up by its rival. But family troubles and intrigues, due to the unruly temperaments of monarchs and children, brought ruin in their wake. As years went on the violence and scandal of Henry II.'s life became intolerable to Eleanor. Mother and sons entered into a conspiracy against the king. Henry discovered and crushed it, and carried off Eleanor to England, where she remained in semi-captivity for some years. She returned subsequently to France and died in 1204 at the great age of eighty-two, having long survived the husband twelve years younger than herself. After Henry's death Eleanor once more became the supreme power in Aquitaine. This remarkable woman remained game to the last. Her old age was varied by an amazing number of journeys to parts of Europe relatively remote. She travels to Messina to find a wife for one son; to Spain to negotiate another royal marriage; to Germany with a ransom for her beloved Richard; to Rome on high matters of state. I have the feeling that at the Judgment Day she will bear herself right haughtily before any heavenly tribunal that dares to arraign her. All her life she played for great stakes, power, love, authority, and of her it may be said she sat down in regal fashion at the feast of life and drank with a will of its mingled cup of good and evil fortune.

But her children lacked their parents' genius, and Eleanor, powerful woman though she was, played a losing game. With the advent of Philip Augustus in 1180, the Plantagenets found themselves face to face with a strong and sagacious man, determined to win back not only what his father had lost but to increase and consolidate the power of the French throne. For some reasons—possibly the absence of picturesque paraphernalia dear to the heart of many writers—Philip Augustus has never filled a place proportionate to his merits in any popular account of French history. Yet it was Philip Augustus who promoted the unity of France by breaking the power of the feudal states and extending the authority of the Crown

over warring elements which, vassal in name, were in fact dangerous rivals. Too cautious to be attractive, no King of France ever served his country more faithfully, and to his skill and genius the French monarchy, in later days, and France herself were to owe their great position in the world.

In the struggle between Philip Augustus and the sons of Henry II., Philip won all along the line till by the peace of Chinon in 1214 the major part of Poitou passed into the hands of the French king. Many and vain were the efforts of the Plantagenets to recover Poitou. The country was sick of war, and the Capetian government restored order and prosperity. It was not only a political but an intellectual conquest. The Langue d'Œil definitely ousts the Langue d'Oc and Île de France imposes its ideas, its language, its learning on Poitou.

I have had occasion to comment before on the real internationalism of the twelfth century. Nations were not as yet race conscious, and boundaries between states had no clear-cut limits. During Henry II.'s reign it was an ordinary event for men to cross the narrow seas and hold office either in France or England. The king's administrative staff was built up from different elements in his large and heterogeneous realm. The Earl of Salisbury was generalissimo in Poitou; Richard of Ilchester was Archdeacon of Poitiers before he became Bishop of Winchester. But Henry's Anglo-Norman administrators, with whom he filled high military and ecclesiastical posts, do not appear to have been popular in Poitou, except, perhaps, the cleric with the curious and attractive name Jean aux Belles Mains (a man of Kent), who kept order in the province, defended the rights of the people, and left the see of Poitiers in 1183 amid universal regret to become Archbishop of Lyons. This early experiment in international administration was doomed to failure. By the end of the twelfth century the nationalist idea had appeared in Europe. It was to gather momentum during the succeeding centuries, till Joan of Arc leads no longer a hegemony of duchies but a unit called France against the English invader of her day.

In 1359 Poitou fell again into Plantagenet hands, but its reconquest was a mere flash in the pan. During the Hundred Years War, disputes between dynasties had become disputes between nations, and the English invaders in the fourteenth century were confronted by a temper non-existent in the time of Henry and Eleanor. Splendid but barren, therefore, were the feats of the Black Prince in France, and let us be thankful it was so. For these French adventures were nothing but a snare and delusion to England. Continental possessions, with the diversion of time and money they involved, thwarted the development of national power and national resources in our country. Territorial rights in France were neither here nor there for England. They rested on false premises and false foundations. It is surely not a mere coincidence that the loss of our last foothold in France, tragically written on the heart of Mary Tudor, marks the opening stages of England's rise to influence as a world power.

CHAPTER XX

POITIERS AND ITS CHURCHES

The charm of travel in France is largely bound up with the quality and distinction of her provincial towns. Though the average English person thinks of France largely in terms of Paris, that seductive and often wayward capital could not live without the sobriety, the restraint, and the hard work of the nation beyond her gates. The many admirable qualities of provincial France have carried the country repeatedly through trials under which a people less solid might well have crumbled. And though it is easy to mock at "la petite vie de province," we have every reason to regard with affection and gratitude the little towns where so much that is gracious and beautiful remains for our delight.

Poitiers holds high rank among these smaller centres. It stands on an outcrop of rock at the confluence of two little rivers, the Clain and the Boivre. The streams when on the point of making an island of the plateau think better of it and leave the town perched on an isthmus. After the fat plains of the Loire, where an exuberant nature finds its response in the no less exuberant architecture of the tourist-haunted châteaux of the Renaissance, mediæval Poitiers on its heights greets us with a welcome aspect of austerity and restraint. In a flat country every hillock tells, and there is something very attractive about the distant view of the town with towers, churches, spires, ramparts, crowning the chalk cliffs. In summer time Poitiers is rather like a green basket, for the cliffs, half concealed by trees and verdure, fall away into meadows below through which the guardian rivers wind their placid way. It is a place of extreme antiquity, for the site has been inhabited continuously since prehistoric times. Poitiers is in the rare and happy

position of having preserved some traces of every architectural phrase in its long history not only from Neolithic man to the Renaissance, but down to modern times. It is no surprise to hear that it is famous for its Romanesque churches, and that the surrounding district holds other churches full of beauty and interest. So great is the artistic wealth of Poitou that the difficulty is not to reach saturation-point too quickly. After more than one visit I am still conscious of how much there remains to be seen and of how much I cannot speak first hand.

Limonum, to use its ancient name, was a fortified citadel of the Pictons before the Roman conquest. Crossing the river by the Pont Neuf, a short walk from Ste. Radegonde takes you to the Dunes, where a great dolmen called the Pierre Levée is pointed out as an altar on which human sacrifices were offered by a tribe practising Druidical rites. Rabelais later on wrote of the Pierre Levée in more genial terms as a stone brought by Pantagruel in the kindness of his heart to cheer up the students of the University of Poitiers. The students drank wine and ate pasties on the table so provided, and made the whilom altar the centre for their feasts.

The Roman occupation, as we saw in the last chapter, took very firm hold on Poitou, and left an unalterable mark on the ancient capital and province. Once conquered, the Pictons threw in their lot with the conquerors and became wholehearted converts to Roman culture. The province grew in fame and wealth, and Poitiers had its temples, aqueducts, arena, on the approved Roman plan. The arena was second only in size to the Coliseum itself and was built to seat 40,000 spectators. I have long since given up any attempt to struggle with the apparently insoluble mystery concerned with the population of Roman provincial cities and the size of the arenas built in them. Whether or not the size of the arena at Poitiers has been exaggerated, I cannot say, but large portions of it remained intact until the middle of the last century. Then the destruction complex, that afflicts periodically the most gifted and artistic nation in Europe, seized on Poitiers, and though archæologists

protested, a syndicate levelled the arena and built houses on the site.

A statue of Minerva, a fine example of Gallo-Roman sculpture, came to light in the course of some street excavations, and can be seen in the Museum. But only a few fragments of the Roman walls remain today, and the same may be said of the thermæ and aqueducts.

Though relics of Roman rule are scanty, Poitiers is fortunate in possessing two buildings of a later date of which there are few survivals in any part of France. The curious Merovingian period, that time of timid experiment, when the Dark Ages sought painfully to disentangle themselves from the arms of the dying classical tradition, must always be of interest to the lover of the Romanesque. For the Merovingian churches took the first steps towards the splendid epoch in building with which we are primarily concerned. It is part of the continuous tradition of Poitiers that she possesses two Merovingian monuments, one of great importance. The Pierre Levée stands on the site of a great Pagan and Gallo-Roman necropolis which has yielded up many curious objects. Thanks to the energy of Père de la Croix, an ardent local archæologist, excavations in the neighbourhood brought to light in 1879 a small half-subterranean chapel of the seventh century, known as the Hypogée Martyrum. Here a priest called Mellebaude had buried the remains of certain Christian martyrs who had suffered for their faith at an earlier date. Mellebaude's Hypogée cannot however compare in importance with the baptistery of St. John, in many ways the most interesting Merovingian monument that has survived in France.

I have had no occasion, so far, in this book to speak of baptisteries, and a few words about them may not be out of place here. They illustrate yet again the reactions of architecture both to ideas and to change of ideas in cult and dogma.

The baptismal rite has undergone many alterations in the course of centuries. In the early days of the Church baptism was administered not to infants but to adults. Two forms grew up side by side, one aspersion or sprink-

ling, the other immersion, which consisted in plunging the neophyte bodily into a piscina of water. For a long time immersion was the method most in favour, but as it was not easy to accommodate a large water tank in the ordinary basilica, it became usual, after Constantine's Edict in 313, to attach baptisteries to episcopal churches. For in the early days the rite was administered on solemn festivals only, and always by a bishop. In Italy and the East baptisteries were commonly round or hexagonal, with a piscina in the middle, a form well adapted to the particular ceremony they served. But as Christianity spread over Europe and numbers grew, it became more and more difficult to administer baptism by immersion to the host of converts who flocked into the Church. Possibly for elderly people in a northern climate the rite so carried out had many disadvantages. Immersion fell into disuse, and during the Romanesque period was entirely given up. Sprinkling became, from that time onwards, the practice of the Church, fonts superseding piscinas in the baptisteries.

The baptistery at Poitiers stands near the cathedral of St. Pierre, and dates in its present form probably from the seventh century. Claims are made for a still more ancient foundation on the same site going back to the fourth century. Whatever the exact date, it is certainly one of the oldest places of Christian worship in France. It consists of a rectangular building, with gable ends about 50 feet long and 25 wide, built in *petit appareil*. Three apsidioles were added during the Romanesque period, and the original plan has suffered much damage, both wanton and under the specious guise of restoration. A flight of steps leads down into a small narthex that forms the entrance. For many years scholars disputed among themselves as to the origin of this curious building, known locally as the temple of St. John, and often considered a Pagan monument. Possibly a Pagan temple stood on the same site, but the question of the baptistery was finally settled when excavations brought to light the ancient piscina, long since filled in. The gable ends are very curious, decorated with squat pilasters of the

Corinthian order—the same type as may be seen at Germigny-les-Prés. The star with six rays, an emblem of Syrian origin, also is in evidence. Within are some much damaged frescoes of the twelfth century, and a collection of Gallo-Roman and Merovingian antiques assembled by the energetic Père de la Croix, who worked enthusiastically and with success for the preservation of the baptistery. That various attacks, happily foiled, were made on it by the municipality of Poitiers goes without saying. The chance of destroying a building of such antiquity does not fall every day to the lot of City Fathers garbed as apostles of progress. The rectangular block of the baptistery bears a strong family likeness to the Saxon church at Bradford-on-Avon, which is a product of the same ideas working at a somewhat later date in England than in France.

From Pagan, Gallo-Roman, and Merovingian days we reach in due course the noble churches of Romanesque period at Poitiers. As we saw in the last chapter, Poitiers from the end of the tenth century was a capital and a favourite residence of the Guilhems, counts of Poitou and dukes of Aquitaine. But though Poitiers under the Guilhems, and subsequently under the Plantagenets, was a brilliant centre, I must repeat here what was said in the last chapter—there are few traces of the personal element about churches. Henry of England and Eleanor of Aquitaine ruled in Poitou jointly and individually for over sixty years, and the Plantagenets were great church builders on both sides of the Channel. To commit a crime and found an abbey was a form of penance highly popular among members of that august race. A woman of Eleanor's calibre was usually a patroness of the arts. During the years that she was Queen of France she had been in constant touch with Suger, the quality of whose mind must have appealed strongly to her own vigorous spirit. Though not many churches, except the cathedrals of Poitiers and Saintes, preserve any record of Plantagenet generosity, the presence of the court in Poitou would serve undoubtedly to encourage the great building schemes already in hand, though our information is irritatingly

scanty. Possibly the doings of such a turbulent pair as Eleanor and Henry kept the chroniclers of the time busy, and may have distracted their attention from humbler folk like builders and architects, who, thanks to the winnowing hand of time, are of more interest to us today than the kings and nobles they served.

St. Hilaire, the oldest Romanesque church in Poitiers, is a very fine example of eleventh-century architecture. Tradition has it that the great saint and Bishop of Poitiers, whose name it bears, was buried in a chapel on this site during the fourth century. It became of course a place of pilgrimage, and various churches were duly built by the faithful and no less punctually burnt by pirates and Norsemen. During the eleventh century Emma, a Norman princess, twice Queen of England by virtue of her marriage first to Ethelred the Unready and then Canute, began a new church of St. Hilaire. The present building follows the main lines of Emma's church and incorporates some of the material. We know the name of the architect, Gautier Coorland, who must have been a man of great ideas. Stripped of her wealth in 1042 by that irritating person her son, the Confessor, Emma was unable to go on with the church. The work was finished after her death by Agnes, a pious Countess of Poitou, and was consecrated in 1049 in the presence of no less than thirteen bishops and archbishops.

The church finished in 1049 had no side aisles and was built with a transept carrying an apsidiole on each arm. It had at that time neither ambulatory nor radiating chapels. Gautier Coorland's church was remodelled early in the twelfth century, when side aisles were added taking in the lower part of the tower—originally separated from the main building.* The cupolas of the nave were probably added at this date—they are altogether too fine in construction to be eleventh-century work. The unknown architect who remodelled St. Hilaire seems to have borrowed the principle of alternating pillars and columns from the Lombard or Rhenish School.

Many and heavy have been the vicissitudes of St.

* Lefèvre-Pontalis, " Congrès Archæologique, Poitiers," 1903.

Hilaire since Romanesque times. Further chapels were added in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and a Flamboyant portal on the north side aisle. Bombarded and sacked by the Protestants during the wars of religion, the great belfry collapsed at the end of the sixteenth century, a disaster leaving havoc in its wake. The unhappy church was further mutilated by its canons during the eighteenth century in accordance with the execrable taste of the time. During the Revolution it was sacked for a second time and turned into a stable. Luckily the contractor who was going to pull it down could not find the purchase money, and his contract was cancelled before the work of demolition was begun. During the nineteenth century it was taken in hand by Abadie with less dire results, on the whole, than what we find at Périgueux and Angoulême. But, with his usual eagerness to improve on the plan of the eleventh-century architects, he shortened the nave by two bays and gave free play to his fancy in the west end. The west end of the church is not even a modern reconstruction but a modern invention.

But it would be ungracious to deny that, restoration or no restoration, St. Hilaire is a splendid building—the finer for its very severity. It is unique among the churches of France in possessing no less than seven aisles. The forest of pillars with their capitals, some carved, some plain; the four great domes carried on squinches; the choir raised above a crypt to an abnormal height; the radiating chapels of the *chevet*—all this makes a profound impression. It is a lofty church and includes every variety of vaulting. The side aisles are covered with groined vaults, the transept by barrel vaults with reinforcing arches. Great reinforcing arches also divide the domes in the central nave. Controversy is at once heated and puzzled over the fine Corinthian columns on the ground floor of the belfry, which luckily survived the fall of the tower. They are classical rather than mediæval in feeling, and are claimed by some archæologists as Carolingian, but Monsieur de Lasteyrie does not share this view.

St. Hilaire, admirable though it is, cannot, I think, be regarded as a typical Poitevin church. Generally speaking,

the latter are of moderate size and very richly decorated. St. Hilaire, on the contrary, is on a large scale and austere in ornament. The Poitevin School has its own marked features, but the reader, who has borne with me thus far, will realise how few and dangerous are the generalisations it is possible to make about architecture in France. Genius is never circumscribed by conventional practice, and though, as we have seen, different churches tend to fall into certain well-defined groups in different parts of the country, the exceptions are so numerous as often to neutralise the rule. In the west cupolas and domes as a covering for the nave obviously attracted the twelfth-century builders, though they are less numerous in Poitou than further south—a point to which I shall return in a subsequent chapter. The normal Poitevin church is lofty and narrow, with side aisles almost the height of the nave. The sanctuary consists of a narrow ambulatory supported by heavy columns with historiated capitals and an apse with radiating chapels. Barrel vaulting is usual in the nave, groined vaulting in the side aisles. Transepts are small and inconspicuous, but where they cut the nave, a cupola carrying a central tower is often introduced. On the whole, they are more remarkable without than within, thanks to the special care devoted to the façades and exterior decoration. It was in the twelfth century that sculpture in Poitou attained its greatest development. Good stone, easy to work, was near at hand, and so we find not only elaborate capitals within the churches, but a wealth of exterior ornament unknown on such a scale elsewhere.

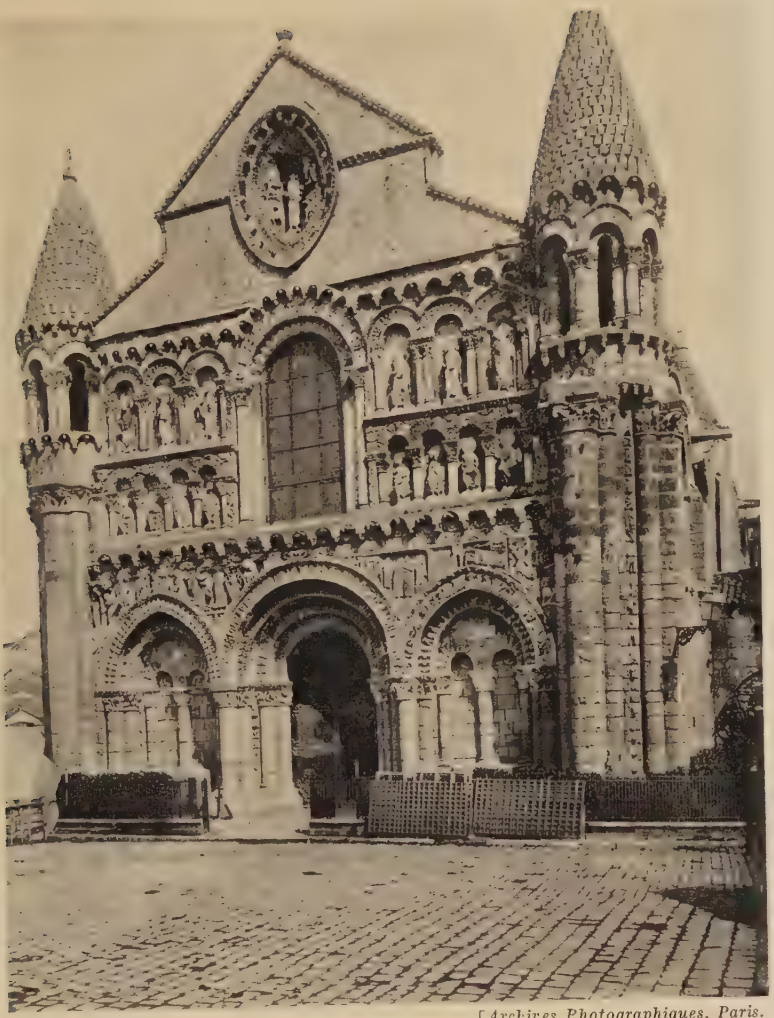
Façades, archivolts of doors, side walls, windows, apses, were covered with rich and varied designs. Strangely enough in a district remarkable for its sculpture, tympana were not in favour. In their place, we find doors with elaborate archivolts often framed by a festooned arch. The churches of Poitou and the Saintonge are rich in decorative themes rather than in groups of sculpture. The little figures crowded on to this restricted space are ingenious and beautiful, but necessarily they lack the majesty of the tympana at Moissac, Autun, Beaulieu, or

Conques, where the flat surface lends itself to a great composition. As we should expect from the geographical position of the ancient province of Aquitaine, influences reached the builders of the west primarily from the School of Toulouse, though there are further traces of influence both from Burgundy and Auvergne.

Façades in this part of France fall into two main types, one common in Poitou, the other in the neighbouring district of the Saintonge. Both alike treat the west end of a church as though it were the page of a missal book—a surface to be covered with every conceivable elaboration of ornament. The architectural principle common to both types is division into horizontal zones separated by a cornice or by finely sculptured bands. In Poitou the façades consist of three large openings or arcatures on the ground floor, heavily carved, with corresponding openings on the higher levels. The opening in the centre forms the principal entrance to the church. There is generally a large window in the zone immediately above it. The arcatures to right and left of the principal entrance are usually blind. The effect is not very happy, but possibly westerly gales and the proximity of the Atlantic made it undesirable to add unnecessarily to doors. In the Saintonge the arcatures on the higher levels are multiplied and form a series of little galleries, which do not correspond with the openings below. These recessed arcades are often filled with figures.

But though the two types are easily recognised, it is a curious example of the interpenetration of ideas that Notre Dame la Grande at Poitiers should have a façade of the Saintonge type with multiple arcades on the higher levels, whereas Sainte Marie des Dames at Saintes should be built on the Poitevin plan.

The little church of Notre Dame la Grande at Poitiers is famous throughout Europe. A French writer in happy words has called it "le roman fleuri du 12ème siècle." It has been said a hundred times, and I can only repeat the phrase, that the façade recalls the delicate carving of some ivory casket or missal cover. It is almost unbelievable that the hand of man should possess the cunning to bend stone



[*Archives Photographiques, Paris.*

POITIERS : NOTRE DAME LA GRANDE.

[P. 310

into forms of loveliness so delicate and so rare. On a sunny day the church glows like a gem in the market square where the country women, under their large umbrellas, chatter and chaffer among their multicoloured and delectable wares—vegetables, flowers, fruit, cheese, and other goods—set out for sale round the House of God. Catholicism has very human and very homely sides, and knows how to touch humble lives in a personal and intimate way. The market women will not drive their bargains any the less shrewdly for having knelt for a few moments in prayer before the image of the Virgin and asked her blessing on the day's work. The façade of Notre Dame is flanked to right and left by two little towers, each crowned by a turret looking like a pine cone. The archivolts of the openings on the ground floor, heavily carved with ornamental motifs, recall the Oriental borders on silk textiles or ivory coffers. A beautiful cornice with modillions separates the ground-floor openings from the central window. On either side of this window runs a double band of arcatures, with Apostles in the lower row and prophets in the higher. The façade is finished with a gable end decorated by an oval-shaped lozenge containing an image of Christ in Glory among the symbols of the Evangelists.

Between the archivolts of the lower openings and the cornice runs an elaborate and famous bas relief. A variety of persons and scenes are fitted into the spandrels—so it would seem at first sight—without much apparent connection. Our guilty first parents are easily recognised on the extreme left, eating apples with a self-conscious air. Then comes a throned figure who announces himself as Nebuchadnezzar. What is he doing, and also four figures bearing engraved phylacteries, among scenes of the Annunciation and Nativity ?

To answer this question I must digress for a moment into a curious and interesting byway that concerns the origin of the mystery play. It is never possible wholly to isolate one form of art from another, especially in a period of revival when " origins " are closely related. Rivers whose courses lie widely apart may spring from the same water-

shed and be fed from the same eternal snows. In the eleventh century, as we have seen, strings muted for generations began to vibrate again after the torpor of the Dark Ages. The revival of sculpture quite naturally went hand in hand with the revival of literature. Each turned to the other for help and support, sculpture giving graphic expression to the new ideas abroad. Monsieur Mâle* has examined in great detail the developments in iconography due to liturgical changes and innovations. He traces the important part played by the mystery plays, which, as time went on, developed round that central mystery of the Church—the Mass itself. I referred on page 74 to the perplexities of the puzzled Protestant to whom the liturgical language of the Church is unknown; and who, should he accidentally hear Mass, fails to realise that he is looking on at what is in its essence a sacred drama. But ritual act in the ceremonial of the Roman Church has a symbolic meaning of some kind. Thus in the ancient use of Lyons, the priest, after the Elevation of the Host, remains with arms outstretched, typifying the sacrifice of the Cross. Or, again, at the office of Tenebræ on Maundy Thursday the lights are extinguished one by one to express the darkness of the Crucifixion. The solitary candle hidden under the altar, and subsequently restored to its place, symbolises Christ's descent into Hell and His Resurrection from the dead.

Now the dramatic instinct springs from something fundamental in human nature, and is as strong among primitive as among sophisticated people. In the early Middle Ages the instinct could only express itself in religious form. The desire to expand and dramatise incidents connected with the Passion and other parts of the Gospel narrative led to consequences little foreseen by the monks, whose pious pantomimes were to re-create the theatre. The revival of drama, like the revival of sculpture, had humble beginnings. It did not spring from any knowledge regained of the sublime tragedies of ancient Greece, or of the more sophisticated art of Rome. Greek literature was wrapped in oblivion, and the mystery

* Mâle, " L'Art Religieux du 12ème Siècle," p. 121 *et seq.*

play proved the bridge over which the drama was to pass from religious to secular use, and so to its later and splendid developments.

We must remember how little material was at hand to feed the intellectual curiosity of the time. Vivid and welcome must have been the ceremonies of the Church to an age without books, papers, pictures, or amusements as we understand the word. The great themes of the Redemption presented in dramatic form would mark a red-letter day in the humdrum life of town and village. Where a need, however inarticulate, exists, some response springs up to meet it. By the end of the tenth century the oldest liturgical play, the "Drama of the Resurrection," had made its appearance. St. Dunstan in his "Book of Customs" has left us a detailed description of this play. It began on Good Friday, when a Cross wrapped in a veil was placed in a coffin on the altar, thus symbolising the burial of Christ. There it stayed till early on Easter morning, when the Cross was removed, leaving the veil as a token of the abandoned grave clothes. During Mass a little scene was acted at the altar by monks, who were dressed to represent the angel at the Tomb and the three Marys. The sorrowing women came with their perfumes to the Tomb, and the angel proclaimed to them the joyful news of the Resurrection.

This dramatic performance, daring though the innovation must have seemed, apparently took firm hold of the religious sentiment of the day. The practice spread rapidly throughout France, and from France to other countries. So popular a development did not leave the sculptors of the hour unaffected. Art was the handmaid of the Church, and many a worn carving, the sense of which puzzles us today, is in fact a clue to ideas and sentiments once paramount. Iconography is peculiarly sensitive to any change in religious influence. The "Drama of the Resurrection" left its mark on mediæval sculpture. Primitive iconography grew up in the East, and the Tomb in the early Christian decoration was represented as a Pagan funerary building. The first reaction of this primitive drama on the scenes dealing with the Resurrection was

the superseding of the Pagan building by a sarcophagus. The Holy Women at the Tomb are—as we have already seen—frequently represented in Romanesque sculpture. A manuscript preserved at Tours gives us a naïve conversation between the Marys and two spice merchants. This little scene was soon added to the original "Drama of the Resurrection." No one can read the dialogue without a smile, for it reveals a very human and natural trait which we must all recognise as characteristic. For the Marys, deep though their grief, are typical French housewives, true to type throughout the ages. The dialogue makes it clear that they have no intention of paying the exorbitant price demanded by the young merchant with whom they first enter into conversation. Though he insists that his goods are of the first quality, they turn aside to make their purchase of perfumes from an older man, who asks a more reasonable figure.

From a Drama of the Passion to a Drama of the Nativity was a natural step. To the sacred dialogue at the altar was added in due course a dramatic performance held in the porch of the church. Here it was possible to introduce more characters and produce something on a more elaborate scale. Human nature throughout the ages has responded as naturally to the story of Christmas as a flower turns towards the sunshine. The Christmas legend, with its shepherds, angels, and kings; the moving imagery that gathers up into one exquisite whole the glory of the star and the humility of the manger, will stir the human heart so long as there are mercifully children of all ages in the world. To the "Drama of the Passion" was added, therefore, the "Drama of the Prophets," whose immense popularity it is easy to understand. Here, as elsewhere, France led the way. "Le Drame des Mages est né en France," writes Monsieur Mâle,* "comme d'ailleurs à ce qu'il semble tout le cycle des drames liturgiques. Nous eûmes alors le double génie du drame et de l'art. La France fut pour l'Europe du moyen âge ce que la Grèce avait été dans l'antiquité pour le monde méditerranéen, l'initiatrice."

* Mâle, "L'Art Religieux du 12ème Siècle," p. 140.

The "Drama of the Prophets" was based on a sermon attributed to St. Augustine. This sermon was read in church on Christmas morning, and not only proclaimed the truths of Christianity but reproached the Jews for their hardness of heart and incredulity. The sermon first preached was subsequently acted. The prophets of the ancient law were called upon, one after the other, to bear their testimony to the Incarnation. Virgil and the Sybil were also introduced as witnesses from the Pagan world. The "Drama of the Prophets" was first played at Limoges towards the end of the eleventh century and proved very popular. On it was based an ancient French mystery play, the "Drama of Adam," which elaborated the theme still further. Mankind is lost through the sin of Adam, but prophets and Nebuchadnezzar proclaim the coming of a Messiah. This prelude leads by a natural sequence to the story of the Annunciation, Visitation, Nativity, and Redemption.

The scholarship which has pointed out the significance of these long forgotten mystery plays has also thrown a flood of light on many obscure points in mediæval sculpture. A mystery play of the Nativity is the key to the scenes, at first sight somewhat puzzling, on the frieze at Notre Dame la Grande at Poitiers. The twelfth-century sculptor sought inspiration not directly from the Bible, but from the Bible story as it appears in the "Drama of Adam" and its older version of the "Drama of the Prophets." The various characters of the mystery play all appear in due order, beginning with Adam and Eve. Nebuchadnezzar sits on his throne and explains the little affair of the young men in the furnace. Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel hold phylacteries each engraved with his special prophecies. The celebrated words about the stem of Jesse are engraved on the phylactery carried by Isaiah, and it is significant that a tree of Jesse—the traditional image of the genealogy of Jesus—surmounted by a dove, frames the beautiful figures of the Annunciation. The tree of Jesse is unknown in Oriental iconography. As a formula it appears for the first time in sculptures clearly derived from scenes in the mystery plays. In the hands of Abbé Suger at St. Denis,

it was to become one of the most splendid themes known to stained glass. At Chartres and elsewhere the prophets take their places in the sacred genealogy. Further, from St. Martial of Limoges, the home of the "Drama of Adam," originated another play, no less popular, dealing with the Wise and Foolish Virgins. Again sculpture registers the prevailing sentiment of the hour, and the Wise and Foolish Virgins, as we shall see, appear frequently on the sculptured archivolts of the churches of the west.

We must, I think, bear in mind a further consideration when looking at a curious and varied scene such as is preserved for us on the frieze at Poitiers. To us the work we admire is essentially archaic. However beautiful, and however interesting, part of the charm lies in its age; the sense of something vanished, of ideas and of an outlook on life remote from our own. It is well to remember that to the people of the day there was no association of ideas about the churches of the twelfth century of the kind that we in retrospect call mediæval. On the contrary, this art was the last word in modernity. Sculptures dealing with miracle plays acted in front of the church were as intelligible to a twelfth-century audience as current pictures in the *Graphic* and the *Sketch* are to us. It did not strike them as odd that the Godhead and other heavenly personages should appear in the dresses of the hour. There was a human happy side bound up with the life of the Church, and when the frieze of Notre Dame la Grande was new, we can fancy the pleasure with which the people of Poitiers must have viewed the various scenes and the memories they recalled of dramatic performances memorable in the life of the town. Both drama and art necessarily had a religious expression, for secular art had ceased to exist. But it does not follow that they passed, in consequence, without criticism. We may rest assured that among the monks who acted there were star turns then as now—and assuredly sharp and witty French comment among the crowd as to the performance of this or that saint and prophet.

Archæologists think that the façade of Notre Dame de Poitiers dates from the middle of the twelfth century

—that is to say, some fifty years later than the apse and choir. It is contemporary, therefore, with the marriage of Eleanor of Aquitaine and Henry II. In the churches of the west, as we have seen, sculpture usually takes decorative forms that are adapted with extraordinary skill to the curve of the arch. The frieze at Notre Dame is the more remarkable for the groups of figure sculpture that stretch in a band across the front of the church. Very beautiful are the angel and Virgin in the scene of the Annunciation. I know of no Virgin so regal as this one. In her flowing robes and pointed shoes she stands, no humble maiden, but a young princess giving audience to the divine messenger. Equally fine, in spite of the mutilations it has suffered, is the figure of the angel. Clearly some breath from the School of Toulouse has blown through the draperies of this Gabriel and Mary. The angel gives the same impression of life and movement that we find in the capitals of the Daurade. We feel that he has descended a moment since from Heaven, and that the winds of Paradise still flutter in the folds of his garments. The group of the Visitation is grievously mutilated, but delightful indeed are the scenes of the Nativity. If the execution is more naïve than in the group of the Annunciation, the sculptor has done his work with touching sincerity. The Babe in the manger, watched over by the ox and the ass; the Virgin in her heavily draped bed, holding out a tender hand to the Child; the midwives washing the Babe in a font-like vessel, while Joseph looks on, half asleep as usual—few groups of the Nativity can equal this one in interest and charm.*

The interior of Notre Dame has been sadly damaged by the crude polychromy with which the villainous taste of 1857 thought fit to cover every inch of the surface. But though not large, the proportions are satisfactory. It is built on the typical plan of a Poitevin church, a lofty nave with a barrel vault and two very high, very narrow side aisles covered by groined vaults. The ambulatory is also

* Monsieur Mâle has shown how this particular formula of the Nativity is Syrian in origin. It first appears in the Ampulla of Monza.—"L'Art Religieux du 12ème Siècle," p. 88.

small, but has large pillars with finely carved capitals. The church has an apse with three radiating chapels but no transept. English visitors will, I hope, pay their respects to the small sixteenth-century statue of the Virgin holding a bunch of keys, which is kept behind the High Altar. There is a pretty story told about the little virgin to whose honour the present statue was erected. Her intervention, so the legend runs, frustrated the designs of a traitor who tried to steal the keys of the town and hand them over to the English, who were then besieging Poitiers. Unfortunately the date of this interesting incident, given as 1202, does not fit the story, for the Plantagenets were in possession of Poitou at the time and had no need to besiege their own capital. But let us hope that no trifling discrepancy about dates interferes with the solemnity of the procession every Easter Monday which commemorates the miracle of the keys and the discomfiture of the hereditary enemy.

Ste. Radegonde, part Romanesque, part Gothic, is another attractive church containing a very ancient tomb of the founder. Only one of the Romanesque pillars in the ambulatory is historiated. It is a curious piece of work that dates from the end of the eleventh century and bears strong marks of Oriental influences. The legend set out is that of Daniel thrown into the lions' den and fed by Habbakuk. The four sides of the capital depict first Adam and Eve, then Daniel himself between an angel and Habbakuk (the angel holding up Habbakuk in most uncomfortable fashion by the hair), then Cyrus the great king on his throne pondering the situation, finally the satisfactory conclusion of Daniel's enemies being devoured by the lions. Ste. Radegonde, St. Porchaire, and the church at Montierneuf will all repay a visit, so too will the Palais de Justice, once the palace of the counts of Poitiers. The great twelfth-century hall built by Henry Plantagenet was restored and enlarged in the fifteenth century by Jean, Duc de Berry, a munificent patron of the arts. But it is before the splendid twelfth-century window in the *chevet* of the cathedral of St. Pierre that I would fain bring this chapter to a close. For no chapter could end on a note more fine.

"Les vitraux du douzième siècle sont sereins comme une belle journée d'été," we are told, and high midsummer weather reigns in the window at Poitiers. This splendid work ranks alongside the masterpieces of Chartres, for in it the influence of Abbot Suger is unmistakable. From St. Denis, under the inspiration of this man of genius, radiated, as we have already seen, the great school that not only gave birth to Gothic art but inspired the finest work of the twelfth century. St. Denis was a centre to which flocked a group of creative artists who were fired with new ideas by the great abbot. From St. Denis they went forth in turn to spread fresh conceptions of architecture, of sculpture, of stained glass. Sculptors and glass workers from St. Denis created at Chartres miracles of art that have never been surpassed. Men of the same school, trained in the same traditions, worked at Le Mans and at Angers. Similar influences are evident at Poitiers.

The window stands in the *chevet* of the cathedral facing the central aisle. The magnificent figure of the crucified Saviour hangs on a scarlet Cross; the Virgin and St. John with the Roman soldiers, one carrying a lance, the other a sponge, stand to left and right. The scarlet Cross glows like a ruby, and dominates the whole window. It cuts in two the scene of the Ascension on the next level. Above appears a great figure of Christ in Glory on that exquisite blue ground whose secret eludes the modern glass-maker. The Saviour stands in an oval, flanked on each side by an angel in adoration. Immediately below the Cross is a small panel showing the Marys at the Tomb. Beneath that again comes the Crucifixion of St. Peter. No words can convey the majesty of this window, with its splendid design and dazzling colour. On a bright day, when sunshine floods the cathedral, the paintbox of Heaven itself might have been drawn upon to supply the reds and blues whose secret has for centuries been lost to the world.

The iconography of the crucified Christ has a long history behind it. The Cross appears very tentatively in Christian art. For centuries no one dared to represent the scene on Calvary. At last a Hellenistic formula of the crucifixion appears in art towards the end of the fifth century. The

Christ is youthful, beardless, and nude. Then came the Syrian formula of a bearded Christ crucified in a long sacerdotal tunic. The Virgin and St. John, the lance-bearer and the sponge-bearer, all formed part of a Syrian design that passed into current iconography. Carolingian ivories and illuminated manuscripts had, however, preserved the Hellenistic formula. The art of the Middle Ages adopted and modified both conceptions. In the art of the twelfth century the bearded Christ and the personages gathered at the foot of the Cross remain as in the Syrian formula, but a loin cloth replaces the voluminous robe of an earlier date. It is this combined type that we find in the Christ of the Poitiers window. The effigies of Eleanor and Henry, disguised as pious founders, also figure in this great composition. They were, as we have seen, people of outstanding character and capacity, capable of holding their own in any company. Here, however, they must step down and lay their temporal crowns at the feet of the unknown artists and craftsmen of the Middle Ages —men who rest in unvisited tombs, but whose praise endures from generation to generation.

CHAPTER XXI

ST. SAVIN

St. Savin-sur-Gartempe, a humble commune, has three great attractions—its spire, its mural paintings, and the pleached alley on the river bank. May I be pardoned for inserting the pleached alley in such company? There is a haunting charm about the Gartempe, as it winds by the little town, and chatters in a conversational way with the beautiful stone bridges beneath which it flows. Along the left bank of the river is a terrace with a castle, part mediæval, part Renaissance. In the background, above a tangle of red roofs, rises the *chevet* of the Romanesque abbey. Crowning all, the glorious Gothic spire shoots upwards into the sky. You may go far, even in France, where rivers small and great lend such varied distinction to the landscape, to find a scene more enchanting than this one. The exquisite courtesy of a little village girl with whom I talked in the *charmille* on the river bank—there is something to my ear peculiarly attractive about that word *charmille*—adds a last touch of old-world charm to my recollections of St. Savin. France scatters her jewels with a lavish hand in many bypaths, and St. Savin, which lies within easy reach of Poitiers by motor-car, is a jewel to be noted and prized.

As you travel through the rolling Poitevin landscape, the spire of St. Savin springs out of the horizon with an élan that recalls the first sight—always unforgettable—of the spires of Chartres. I for one can only express my own view that this fifteenth-century spire, though much later in date than Chartres, is one of the most beautiful in France. As the eye is carried upwards, you feel that this time the vault of heaven must yield to a shaft of aspiration so perfectly conceived. Yet there is not an unrestrained or exuberant line about the spire of St. Savin. Eight-sided

and decorated with crockets, it springs from a tower of earlier date with an open gallery and blind arcading on the lower stage. The sobriety of this Romanesque tower seems to have laid a finger of restraint on the fantasies of a later age. Hence a rare combination of elegance and strength, a welding, at once happy and dignified, between the spirit of the Gothic and the spirit of the Romanesque.

The abbey church of St. Savin, like many others in France, has had a long and stormy history. The abbey was founded by Charlemagne. It was burnt by Norman pirates in the tenth century and rebuilt in the eleventh—the date of the present church. The English, I regret to say, burnt the town in 1371, and the Protestants fell upon the monastery at a later date. The church, by some miracle, escaped these vicissitudes, and is a fine example of early Romanesque work. It is a large church, built on the plan of a Latin cross—very lofty, with three naves of almost equal height. A triforium, or windows in the nave are seldom found in a Poitevin church. The typical building in this part of France is lighted from the side aisles, which, in consequence, are vaulted at a height almost equal to that of the nave. Five radiating chapels surround the choir at St. Savin, and each arm of the short transept carries an apsidiole. The eleventh-century architect, whoever he was, had thoroughly mastered the principles of construction. It is rare to find any church of the period so well lighted—a fact of no small importance to the frescoes it contained. The unknown builder had grappled successfully with the problem of windows in the side aisles, without weakening his main structure.

It seems probable that the church was built in four distinct stages—first the choir and transept, next the six bays of the nave that rest on cylindrical columns, then the three bays of the nave that diverge in so strange a manner from the main axis of the building, finally the porch. For the west end of St. Savin is the tower itself, and the tower with its buttresses and blind arcades and openings has more than a taste of fortification about it—the Church of God quite equal, if necessary, to the literal

task of the Church Militant. The main aisle has a barrel vault, the more remarkable that only the first three bays have reinforcing arches. The rest of the vault is an uninterrupted sweep, providing an admirable surface for the frescoes that cover St. Savin from porch to apse. Four big piers formed by clustered columns carry the central cupola. There is a fine sanctuary surrounded by ten columns, with some historiated and some foliage capitals. The small capitals of the cylindrical columns in the nave are carved with *entrelacs* and *rinceaux*. But sculpture does not come into the picture of St. Savin. What we are concerned with here are the wonderful frescoes which archæologists consider are at once the most ancient and best preserved in France.

Little has been said, so far, in this book about mural paintings of the Romanesque period. Mural painting, whatever its merits, was a medium frail and ill-fitted to resist the ravages of time. Stone is a tougher fellow to deal with, and even blows rained by unfriendly hammers do not involve his complete destruction. But paint is a ladylike person who swoons at a touch of trouble. It is not surprising that decorative ecclesiastical art reached us in the form of sculpture rather than of painting. Further, painting, as I have already remarked, never came under the ban of the Church. Through many troubled centuries it was able to pursue a tranquil career, unharassed by ecclesiastical thunders. There is no break, therefore, in the continuity of painting from classical times as there was in sculpture. The classical tradition merged into the Byzantine, and was handed on in turn to the early Middle Ages. In the church of Santa Maria Antiqua at Rome—known to all visitors to the Forum—and also at San Clemente, we have a series of frescoes that date from the eighth to the eleventh centuries. Mural artists, undoubtedly, drew much inspiration both in iconography and design from the illuminated manuscripts whose light casts a brilliant ray across the gloom of the Dark Ages. These illuminated books were created and preserved in various ecclesiastical centres and were drawn upon largely for models.

So far as Western Europe is concerned, we know from

Gregory of Tours that already in the fifth century, basilicas in Gaul were decorated with paintings. During the Merovingian period similar decoration was lavished on the churches of the day, often to cover up their grave structural deficiencies. The same principle held good in Carolingian times, and during this period schools of illuminated manuscripts were formed at Rheims, Tours, Corbie, and St. Gall. In the confusion that followed the break-up of Charlemagne's empire, artistic supremacy passed to Germany and the empire of the Ottos. At Reichenau, an important artistic centre under this dynasty—mural paintings of the tenth century have come to light that have added fresh links to our chain of knowledge. Many Carolingian manuscripts are in existence, but no fragment of wall painting in France has survived from the period. In the eleventh and twelfth centuries a great school of fresco painting flourished in France, but this remarkable achievement was lost to sight until Prosper Merimée, then an Inspector of Monuments Historiques, published his famous report in 1836 on the frescoes of St. Savin. France at last woke up to a new appreciation of treasures long neglected in her churches. The removal of whitewash and other disfigurements has rescued many examples, wraithlike though they be, of the mural decoration that centuries ago made her churches glow with all the colours of the New Jerusalem. One point in common marks both classical and mediæval art—builders and architects at both periods did not hesitate to cover stone and marble with paint. The columns of the Parthenon, like those of the Romanesque and Gothic churches more than a thousand years later, formed part of a brilliant colour scheme. St. Savin illustrates this method, for even the columns of the nave were painted to represent agate and other rare marbles, traces of which remain to this day.

The frescoes of the nave at St. Savin have great quality. Whether or not the artists of the day learnt their lessons from Byzantine teachers—the theory put forward by Merimée—the product is not Byzantine, but stamped with the indefinable hall-mark of the French genius that makes all things new. Thanks to a curious document

written by a German monk, Theophilus, in the twelfth century, we know a good deal about the technique of mediæval mural painting. Theophilus makes it clear that the principles adopted by French and German artists were Byzantine in origin. The walls were covered by a chalk wash, and the colour applied when the foundation was still wet. The artists worked without cartoons, and, to use a nursery phrase, "made it up as they went along." It must have been a ticklish task to attack a wall space with improvisations in colour from the Scriptures, but certain traditional types and gestures were used in the composition of the various scenes. The range of colour used was not large. At St. Savin red and yellow ochre are the dominant tints, varied by white, rose, and green. Blue was an expensive colour, and apparently little used except for the robes of Christ and those of the Virgin. The beautiful blue background of Byzantine frescoes is not found in typical French work. At Berzé-la-Ville, near Cluny, where such backgrounds exist, the whole decoration is admittedly Byzantine. In French frescoes the backgrounds are light, not dark. There are few half shades, and little or no modelling about the figures. Some of the draperies, with their clinging folds, follow a Byzantine tradition: the gestures, the accessories no less venerable echo other traditions of the Church. No attempt is made to reproduce the dresses and armour of the day. The Biblical characters at St. Savin all wear the same type of conventional robe, classical in feeling. It is an art stripped of all reality and reduced to main lines of simplicity and suggestion.

St. Savin must have been an impressive place in the days of its glory, for the frescoes cover the whole building, from the porch to the sanctuary. It is a little puzzling, judging by their order, to understand on what principle the subjects were allotted. Generally speaking, the supreme scenes of the New Testament are found in the sanctuary, as the most sacred part of the church. However, in the narthex or lower entrance at St. Savin we find one of the most ancient examples in France of the Last Judgment. Christ in Glory sits enthroned, surrounded by

the Elders and by angels carrying emblems of the Passion. The torments of the Last Judgment were brought home forcibly to the mediæval worshipper who crossed the threshold of St. Savin. As the western sun struck the wall, his attention was riveted by graphic scenes from the Apocalypse—the Battle of the Hosts in Heaven—the Angels released from the Euphrates—the Horsemen springing from the Pit—the Woman pursued by the Dragon, an appalling beast with a twisted tail. These frescoes, unhappily much damaged, are full of life and vigour. However, it is comforting and homely, among these terrible scenes of death and judgment, to find that our old friends the Signs of the Zodiac, a theme always popular in Poitou, also take their place in the composition of the porch.

Monsieur Mâle points out* that these frescoes of the Last Judgment at St. Savin have an intimate bearing on the great sculptural themes which were to adorn the churches of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. "Ce sont là déja, comme on le voit," he writes, "les sujets qui s'épanouiront si magnifiquement au portail accidental de nos cathédrales du treizième siècle. Si l'on y réflêchit on reconnaitra que ce Christ en majesté, ces apôtres, ces vieillards, ces souvenirs de l'Apocalypse, remontent jusqu'aux mosaïques qui décorent l'arc triomphal des plus anciennes basiliques de Rome. La tradition s'est perpetuée en s'enrichissant sans cesse, jusqu'à la fin du moyen âge."

The porch has an upper storey where the frescoes have suffered more than in any part of the church. This vestibule, which opens on to the nave, was used as a guard-room at the beginning of the seventeenth century by a miserable being known as the Baron des Francs. This bandit committed every possible outrage at St. Savin. His wife, who was given to capricious good works as some set-off to the enormities of her husband, was a lady with a great sense of her own position. She would come late to Mass, and if the monks had failed to wait for her, would then start a brawl in the church, and send her squire to cut

* Michel, "Histoire de l'Art," vol. i., p. 759.

down the candles on the altar. The church must have suffered severely from the ministrations of such a pair.

Passing from the narthex into the church, the barrel vault of the nave is covered by thirty great frescoes, dealing with Old Testament legends from the Creation to the days of Moses. Unfortunately the series is not complete, owing to the roof having fallen in here and there. Some of these frescoes are of outstanding quality: none in the church is more remarkable than the fresco of the Creation, in which God the Father, in a long robe, launches two globes, representing the sun and moon, into space. The bust of a man appears in a red disc representing the sun, the head of a woman crowned by a crescent moon—an interesting echo of Pagan cults—in the yellow disc of the moon. The superb gesture of the Creator, the two globes like soap bubbles floating against the background of a larger circle which symbolises the firmament, the stylised trees, the attendant angel who looks on in humble adoration—primitive art or art of any age can point to few examples more moving or noble than this one. The inherent genius of the artist triumphs repeatedly over ignorance of technique and perspective. The small boy climbing up a highly stylised Tree of Sechem is a comic little lad, who provokes a smile, but in the same group, how dignified is the gracious figure of the Creator, and how equally dignified the figure of Abraham bowing before the Lord! The more closely these frescoes are studied, the more they reveal of expression and poignancy. The jealousy and anger of Cain are written all over the resentful figure grasping his offering, while gentleness radiates from Abel, bringing his lamb with hands covered by a drapery—an ancient sacrificial practice, Oriental in origin. Enoch, raising his hands in prayer against the globe of the universe is a splendid and vigorous figure. The Greek key pattern appears as a border on his robe. Moses receiving the Law on Sinai is one of the most elaborate designs in the nave. The tables of stone are handed to him by the Lord, who appears in a mandorla. The Burning Bush flames anew at the feet of Moses, while angels with long trumpets proclaim the giving of the Law. More than one artist must have worked

at St. Savin, and I imagine that this fresco is later in date than the one which, in a few simple strokes, evokes the whole image of the Creation.

Very striking too are the frescoes of the Tower of Babel and the Flood. In the first of these, workmen, apparently unhampered by Trade Union rules, are piling up bricks with considerable energy. As for the Ark, it is a three-decker vessel rather like a Byzantine tabernacle, with a fantastic head at the poop. The animals look on serenely from the ground floor, while the heads of Noah and his family appear at the upper windows and contemplate the waste of waters with obvious satisfaction. The Ark sails on over dead and dying figures, and two would-be survivors who have climbed on to the vessel make a desperate, though fruitless, attempt to get inside. The frescoes dealing with the story of Joseph are less interesting than those that treat of earlier scenes in the Book of Genesis. Throughout the series the figure of the Almighty is beardless, and His Divinity is emphasised by a stature always exceeding that of the human beings who come into the story.

The frescoes in the crypt, which tell the story of the martyrdom of St. Savin and St. Cyprien, are in an excellent state of preservation. They show strong marks of Byzantine influence, and many points of resemblance with the frescoes of Berzé-la-Ville. Obviously more than one hand and one mind was at work at St. Savin. In the choir and the radiating chapels time has dealt harshly with the paintings. Merimée found traces of a great Christ in Glory, accompanied by symbols of the Evangelists; and fragmentary figures of saints and angels and prophets, surrounded by beautiful decorative themes, can be traced in this part of the church. Finally, over the west door of the narthex, above the entrance to the church, is a throned Virgin, which dates from the thirteenth century and shows distinct marks of Italian influence. This work, beautiful though it is, stands quite apart from the other frescoes at St. Savin. According to Monsieur Mâle, the earlier frescoes of the church date from the end of the eleventh to the beginning of the twelfth century. Monsieur de Lasteyrie, on the other

hand, considers that they belong to the end of the twelfth century, and that the frescoes of the Apocalypse in the porch may date from the thirteenth century.* Where experts so weighty differ, the humble scribe like myself can only record the two opinions without venturing to express any judgment between them.

On the way back to Poitiers do not fail to stop and visit the ruins of the wonderful group of mediæval castles that crowns the hillock of Chauvigny. Such a collection of keeps and towers and churches crowded on to one small hill is surely unique. You pass from the ancient baronial castle, once the residence of the bishops of Poitiers, to the later and less ferocious-looking Château d'Harcourt. Finally, you come to the other end of the rock, where the frowning mediæval keep the Donjon de Gouzon rises behind the church of St. Pierre.

St. Pierre de Chauvigny is a very remarkable Romanesque church. Though dedicated to the service of the Prince of Peace, its appearance is as frowning and as militant as that of the great fortifications among which it stands. It has a superb *chevet*, with blind arcades and decorated windows. Poitevin architects knew how to make the best of external values, and apsidioles, ambulatory, and choir rise one above another, grouped by a master hand, till all merge in the central feature of the lofty tower. Most attractive is a little tourelle, with pierced arcades and a pine-cone top, which, tucked in between the chevet and the wall of the transept, seems to cling for protection to the massive masonry of the tower. The church was begun in the eleventh century, but was not finished till the end of the twelfth. Gothic influence is already foreshadowed in the later vaulting. But the sanctuary is early Romanesque, and among the historiated capitals of the period none are more remarkable or more alarming than those in the deambulatory. No church of my acquaintance can boast fantastic animals quite so ferocious and generally so terrifying as those of St. Pierre de Chauvigny. There is nothing beautiful about them—they are far removed

* Lasteyrie, "L'Architecture Religieuse à l'Époque Romane," p. 550.

from the exquisite capitals of Cluny or Toulouse—but if the eleventh-century sculptor Giraldus (for he has left his name on a column) set out to scare the mediæval congregations of the day, he must be congratulated on his success. The carvings are full of strength. Horrible, bird-like monsters and other demoniacal personages are engaged in the congenial task of tearing miserable human beings to pieces—" Diabolus " points out Giraldus obligingly below one monster rather more hideous than the rest. Michael and Gabriel appear on other capitals, and also the beautiful stories of the Annunciation and the Adoration of the Magi. Kings and angels seem thoroughly out of place in this nightmare company.

The capitals of St. Pierre de Chauvigny belong to the type of carvings that appears to throw a somewhat sinister light on certain features of mediæval thought.

Grotesques are all very well, and often an attractive testimony to the eternal spirit of the naughty boy saucing his elders, but capitals of the St. Pierre de Chauvigny type are not conceived in any spirit of fun. They do not spring from any mere spirit of exuberance of the sculptor's chisel. They aim deliberately at terror created for ecclesiastical ends. The treasure is hid in earthen vessels, and human perversity has shown repeatedly a most unhappy skill in distorting the Gospel message of love and peace and fellowship with God. But the hold of the Church, even in the days of its strength, must have been less complete than we imagine, if terror had to be called in so frequently to reinforce the arm of priestly authority.

No book has yet been written on the historiated capitals of the Romanesque churches in France. I am convinced that a realm of new knowledge awaits discovery by the archæologist who devotes himself to a comparative study of the various schools. In Poitou alone such an enquiry would fill a volume. Certain types or their variants naturally enough tend to reappear in the same districts, but personally I cannot trace the origin of the monsters and beasts with semi-human faces, that appear in many churches in Poitou and the Saintonge. Some illuminated manuscript, some Oriental prototype, doubtless lies behind.

One theme—more pleasant than those described above—is constantly repeated in this district—affronted lions and leopards, with heads flung back and tails curled high. These are spirited and attractive beasts, as they dance on their hind legs, joining paws and obviously enjoying the fun of trying to catch their own tails.

CHAPTER XXII

AULNAY

It is not my object in this book to fill pages with a detailed description of the many beautiful churches in the west of France. A manual dealing with the iconography and sculpture of Poitou and the Saintonge alone would be a bulky volume. I can only hope to treat the subject-matter on the broadest lines, and to that end shall deal in the following chapters with a few churches that illustrate certain features in the architecture and sculpture of the west. In all that follows, please bear in mind what I have said before—no province in France can show so large a number of churches remarkable for their beauty and for the fantasy and wealth of their decoration. And nowhere in France have we less knowledge of the founders, builders, and sculptors who have left such marvels for our delight.

The abbey church of St. Pierre at Aulnay-en-Saintonge is one of the finest in Europe. That may seem a strong statement, but I make it quite deliberately. Both within and without it is a masterpiece. It stands remote and beautiful on the Roman road—the Theodosian Way—between Saintes and Poitiers, and from whatever point you approach it, you must make up your mind for a long day's excursion, even by motor-car. For Angoulême is 75 kilometres to the south-east, Poitiers nearly 90 to the north, Saintes over 70 to the west.

I motored out from Poitiers on a wet day in early May when cloud and sunshine fought with one another in fine April fashion. The rich, rather monotonous meadowlands succeeded each other, mile after mile, broken here and there by the tiny acropolises of such places as Melle and Lusignan. Everything gleamed and shimmered in the sunshine when the straggling rays caught the wet foliage of the trees and hedges. The fields lay decked in the

brilliant green of the spring, flecked here and there by white blossoms from the fruit trees. Everything and everyone looked fat and prosperous—farms, beasts, and men. As mile after mile the motor bore me onwards through this peaceful countryside, I remembered Stevenson's lines—

> "We travelled in the track of ancient wars
> And all the land was green,
> And love and joy we found
> Where fire and sword had been.
> They pass and smile, those children of the sword;
> No more the sword they wield.
> But, oh, how green the grass
> Beside the battlefield!"

—lines full of meaning in a country which had known Plantagenet wars and religious wrath and the revolutionary fury of the Vendée.

The village of Aulnay is an insignificant place consisting of a few poor houses. The church lies some little way out of the village and stands free from any encumbrances in an old cemetery by the roadside. French cemeteries are apt to be dismal places, filled with weeping angels and broken columns and dreadful contraptions of wire and glass that do duty for wreaths. But the cemetery at Aulnay proved to be a charming, if rather overgrown, garden, like an English churchyard. It is a rare experience in France to have a clear view of a building from every side and to ponder its beauties in a quiet God's acre where rose bushes and flowers keep gentle watch over the dead. Generally speaking, the churches in France are in crowded streets and squares with houses that overflow their limits and encroach on the sacred precincts. Not so Aulnay, set in its garden with the dignity of an English cathedral in its close.

We know less than nothing about the origin of this superb church. There is no document to fix the date of its foundation. It is clear from the internal evidence of the architecture that the *chevet* and choir are of older date than the nave and the west end. Our scanty knowledge of the historical facts is soon set out. Aulnay was

probably a post on the Roman road, and it was the seat of a seigneurie in 925. The church belonged to the abbey of St. Cyprien at Poitiers. It passed, in the twelfth century, to the Chapter of Poitiers Cathedral, who preserved the rights of presentation till the Revolution. Founder, architect, builder—there is no hint or clue as to who or what they were. We puzzle in vain as to why a church so fine should be built in a spot so remote. But perhaps the very silence about origins makes the message of the stones the more impressive. The founders have left not their names but their work to speak for them. And the testimony is magnificent.

Aulnay is a big church, unusually big when compared with the ordinary size of churches in the district. Architecturally, it is in a remarkable state of preservation. The upper portion of the west front has been repaired, but the three magnificent doorways are untouched save for certain mutilations of the figure sculpture. The interior has suffered little or nothing from the violence of the revolutionary or the restorer. The building consists of a nave and two side aisles with barrel vaulting. The church is high in proportion to its breadth, with lofty side aisles that fulfil the structural purpose of buttressing the vaults of the nave. There is a narrow transept, carrying an apsidiole on each arm, and a small sanctuary with no ambulatory. The five bays of the nave are carried on piers consisting of four clustered columns, with capitals magnificently carved—some foliated, some historiated. I shall return to them in a moment. As is usual in Poitou, a tower and spire are raised above the transept crossing. The pointed arch is much in evidence here and has a very fine effect. I often think that great buildings bear some stamp of the mind that called them into being, and the impression on passing within the doors of Aulnay is of genius at once powerful and severe. All honour to his dust, wherever it lies.

But, fine though the general proportions of the church, it is on the west front of Aulnay that the sculptor has spent himself in work almost miraculous in its richness and beauty. Belonging as the abbey did to a religious

[*Archives Photographiques, Paris.*

AULNAY : CRUCIFIXION OF ST. PETER.

[P. 334

community in Poitiers, it is easy to understand why the façade follows the Poitevin rather than the Saintonge plan. The three openings on the ground floor consist of a central door flanked to right and left by two blind doors. The archivolts, which, after the fashion of the west, surmount each opening, are deeply recessed. The central door has four archivolts with figure sculpture on the keystones. The openings to right and left have three archivolts with a rich floral design, twining itself in a hundred varied forms round the principal motif of a twisted S. The two blind doors have tympana, a very unusual feature in this district. To the right Christ sits in glory between His Mother and St. John, to the left there is a curious carving of St. Peter being crucified upside down between two zealous executioners. These wonderful carvings of the archivolts at Aulnay—and I should add of many other churches in the west—must have been inspired by diverse models. Illuminated manuscripts, ivory carvings, Oriental textiles—all these elements taken and transformed by the French genius make themselves felt in the sculptures we are considering. The sculptors of the west, as we have seen, renounced bold effects for exquisite carving. They excelled in their power of handling small motifs, and of giving an impression of extreme magnificence and wealth in detail without overstepping the mark. They did not dispense with figure carving, but they reduced it to a very small scale. They concentrated on archivolts: often each stone in the arch carries its own sculptured motif complete in itself. Consequently we find, not only wreaths of stylised flowers or geometrical designs, but wreaths of figures appearing on the arches. It is possible that historiated archivolts appeared for the first time on the cathedral at Cahors and were reproduced subsequently at Angoulême. The idea spread rapidly throughout the west, and was finally carried north and seized upon by Suger at St. Denis. It is impossible to write on the Romanesque period without an ever growing sense of the genius of Suger and the extraordinary creative force he had brought to bear on the whole world of art. Over and over again an idea is

swept into his mighty net to reappear in new and vigorous form. So with the historiated archivolt; Gothic art was to adopt the principle and make great play with it in later days.

At Aulnay the principal door consists of four archivolts resting on a group of clustered columns carved with monsters and other fantastic designs. The first (inner) archivolt consists of six angels grouped round a medallion of the Lamb. Next come six exquisite figures of armed women, with shield, lance, and buckler, trampling on monsters and demons. This is the famous theme of the poet Prudentius set out in the Psychomachia—the Combat of the Virtues and the Vices. Patience tramples on Wrath, Chastity on Lust, Humility on Pride, Generosity on Avarice, Faith on Idolatry, Harmony on Discord. On the third archivolt come the Wise and the Foolish Virgins grouped round a figure of Christ in the keystone, five with their lamps lit, five with lamps extinguished. The first of the Foolish Virgins knocks with a despairing gesture against the door of the Heavenly City symbolised by a tabernacle. On the fourth archivolt, unfortunately much mutilated, appear the Signs of the Zodiac and the Labours of the Months. Looking closer it is clear that during some restoration of the church this arch was taken down and the sculptured keys replaced in wrong order. Labours and Signs are in some instances separated, and the whole design is confused in consequence. No word can convey any real impression of the beauty of the figures on the main portal and the incredible richness of the decoration of the doors to right and left. Each key of the arch produces a conventional design, something like a plant bent back on itself in the form of an S. An infinity of time and skill was devoted at Aulnay, as at other Churches in the west, to exterior decoration. Fantastic animals, floral and geometrical designs, decorate the capitals of the columns from which the archivolts spring. Fantastic animals and mythical beasts, caught in a network of *rinceaux*, frame the outside windows of the apse. Specially beautiful is the central window, with rich bands of *rinceaux* on either side. The little columns supporting

the window are an instance of goldsmiths' work translated into stone. We may find in the capitals, decorated with a juxtaposition of triangles, an echo of the cloisonné work so much in favour with the Merovingians.

The iconography popular on the Romanesque portals in the west is full of interest. A reference was made in the last chapter to St. Martial of Limoges. The great church —wholly destroyed at the time of the Revolution— was one of the most famous in France. Built to honour the memory of a national saint, it was designed on a magnificent scale and was a leading place of pilgrimage in the west. The presence of pilgrims may have stimulated the development of the liturgical dramas which were very popular. The "Drama of the Magi" and the "Drama of the Prophets" left their mark, as we saw, on the iconography of Notre Dame la Grande at Poitiers. So great was the success of the religious drama that the Scriptures were naturally searched for other themes which might lend themselves to similar treatment.

The story of the Wise and Foolish Virgins was turned into dramatic form at the beginning of the twelfth century and acted at St. Martial. One cannot help feeling a little sorry for the spectators, whose natural desire to see play-acting was chastened by sombre scenes dealing with the Last Judgment. For the attractive maidens with their lamps, lit or empty, pointed a very terrible moral in those mediæval times. It was no laughing matter to be shut out of Paradise and to be relegated among the damned. Thanks to the neighbourhood of St. Martial of Limoges, the drama of the "Wise and Foolish Virgins" spread throughout the west. Sculptors at once seized on the artistic possibilities of the theme. Once again we find iconography reflecting the influence of the primitive mystery play. Other favourite themes are the Battle of the Virtues and the Vices, and the Signs of the Zodiac combined with the Labours of the Months. In an agricultural country we can understand the popularity of the Zodiac group of sculptures among tillers of the soil.

All these subjects appear on the portals of Aulnay, and the traveller will easily identify them in many other places.

Human nature remains much the same all the world over, and, even in the cloister, the instinct not to be outshone by your neighbours moved many pious men. If one church was well set up with Virtues and Vices, Foolish Virgins, Elders of the Apocalypse, and so on, no doubt a neighbouring place was anxious also to cut a good figure in sculptural work.

The west front, hard though it may be to tear ourselves away from it, does not exhaust all that there is to see at Aulnay. Hardly less remarkable is the noble south door, earlier in date and more archaic in workmanship. The first archivolt, carved in very low relief, shows centaurs and gryphons caught in a bank of *rinceaux*. The second archivolt consists of various personages, obviously saints, but their identity is not known. In the third archivolt we have the Elders of the Apocalypse, with musical instruments and vials of perfume. Now in St. John's narrative there are twenty-four Elders, and the fact that thirty-one are represented on the south door at Aulnay illustrates one of the perplexities which beset the mediæval sculptors. For these highly decorated archivolts generally carried a figure on each stone or voussoir of the arch. The later craftsmen of the west façade had emancipated themselves from this tradition, and the Virtues and Virgins, though still on a small scale, cover more than one block. But it dominates the earlier work and often leads to sad trouble where Biblical characters are concerned. Obviously there must not be fewer figures in the archivolt than there are stones in the arch, and the sculptors were often hard put to it to conform their designs to the numbers given in Holy Writ. Hence the addition of seven superfluous Elders, who are called into being to fill up the space. On the third archivolt comes a fascinating row of beasts and beings in which all the fantasy of the Middle Ages has free play. St. Bernard most certainly would have called down fire from Heaven on the sculptor who assembled so many fantastic animals over the south door. In a world ruled by the Church it must have been a great comfort at times to escape from saints and martyrs and the whole paraphernalia of religion. It is difficult to believe that the sceptical French spirit was

not in being in those days, however severely repressed. The centaurs, the chimeras, the dragons, the fabulous human beings on the outer archivolt of the south door at Aulnay, are carved in a spirit of pure enjoyment. Traces of Oriental influence, or rather of Oriental models, are marked on this doorway, among them the ancient motif, common enough on the ivory caskets made for the Khalifs of Cordoba, of animals standing on each other's backs and tearing each other to pieces. This particular theme is rare in the west, but it is to be found on the south porch at Aulnay. The donkey who keeps watch in a monk's cowl is a forerunner of the ribald figures that later on were to be the joy of the Gothic sculptors.

The south door has a fine setting. Above the archivolts comes a rich frieze, with modillions dividing the porch below from the decoration of the higher storey. Resting on the frieze is a small, round window like an *œil-de-bœuf*. This is framed by three archivolts, and two small blind arches stand to right and left. This second storey ends in a high gable that springs from the level of the lofty transept. The two corners of the façade are embellished by a series of fine clustered columns with carved capitals. The whole transept end, with its doorway, upper windows, gable end, and guardian columns, has a wonderful appearance of dignity and strength.

The interior of the church strikes a graver note than the exterior. The pillars of the nave are very fine and in a wonderful state of preservation. Their great height must have spared them from attentions by sons of Liberty armed with hammers. Magnificent floral capitals for the most part decorate the nave, but there are some remarkable historiated capitals with realistic scenes from the Old Testament. Those near the sanctuary are of older date than the capitals of the nave. There is a most unpleasant and realistic capital showing Delilah cutting off Samson's hair, and sculpture can be very menacing in the west. As the afternoon light streamed in through the open door, it lit up a capital carved with heads that were the more monstrous for being human. Of special interest is a capital carved with elephants, probably inspired by some

Oriental textile. The elephants at Aulnay would probably fare badly at the hands of a trained zoologist, for they have no pretensions to anatomical correctness. To make his meaning clear to a puzzled village congregation, the unknown sculptor had thoughtfully carved the words "Hi sunt elephantes" on the plinth. Again, it is very difficult for us to reconstruct the mentality of a village community during the eleventh and twelfth centuries: immobilised on the soil save for here and there some man-at-arms called up for military service by his overlord, and who returned—if he returned at all—with strange and wellnigh incredible tales of peoples and places and animals seen in the course of his wanderings.

If stones could speak, if pillar and capital could tell us of the people and scenes on which they have looked down, what gaps would be filled in our knowledge, what confusion would arise among historians! Inevitably we think of the Middle Ages in terms of their best and their worst—either in terms of cruel bloodshed or of superb church buildings. The half-lights between have vanished, and we can only guess at the life and thoughts of the average man and woman—always the vast majority. The stones keep their secrets, but we may rest assured that no generation who thought and felt meanly could have raised the churches of the Romanesque period. Aulnay, among her cypresses and rose trees, has no word to tell us of the past. But in her loveliness she is an abiding witness to the quality of its thought.

CHAPTER XXIII

MELLE

Melle lies on the road from Poitiers to Aulnay, and can be visited with ease during the longer excursion. It is an old place, full of charm, and bears many traces of having held a position of importance in mediæval times, very different from that of its present obscurity. The little town struggles up and down the slopes of a hillock that overlooks a green and pleasant valley. Through the valley flows a brook, not quite large enough to be dignified by the name of river, but a limpid, conversational stream that gossips, as it flows, with the stones and overhanging trees. As you pass through the deserted streets, there are obvious traces of fine houses and fine buildings whose glory has departed. Melle was originally a Roman settlement, and under the empire coin was minted here. During the Middle Ages it became a great religious centre, and, so I was told by Monsieur le Curé, possessed no less than eleven churches and chapels. The mediæval castle on the crest of the hill has disappeared, but part of the Romanesque church of St. Savinien is now incorporated in the prison, and a similar fate has overtaken the charming Renaissance towers and doorway of the bishop's palace—built, not unskilfully, into the modern Palais de Justice.

There are two lions to hunt in Melle—both good lions, one, indeed, of outstanding quality. I know few churches of the second rank more delightful than St. Hilaire of Melle—formerly a Benedictine priory. Other great churches outshine it in the magnificence of their proportions or decorations. But St. Hilaire has a dignity and beauty all its own, thanks not a little to the charm of its site. For it stands on the banks of the little brook that flows at the foot of the town, and as you come down the opposite slope you catch an enchanting glimpse of a *chevet* with

radiating chapels and red-tiled roofs, rising from a rush-fringed pool where the waters have opened out into a shallow basin. The exterior of St. Hilaire is very rich, and nowhere have I seen more elaborate decoration of windows or a greater wealth of blind arcades with bands and clustered columns. The interior of the church is no less remarkable. The west front, built on the Poitevin plan, with an equal number of openings on the upper and the lower storeys, has suffered a good deal, though three finely decorated windows on the upper storey and two elegant pine-cone turrets remain. Steps lead down to an inside narthex, from which vantage-point you descend into the nave itself. The view from the steps is extraordinarily impressive. The nave has five bays divided by splendid clustered piers. Each pier consists of four engaged columns. Of these, two large columns with carved capitals support the pointed arches of the nave. The piers are divided by a slim column, rather like a pipe-line, that goes up to the roof and supports the transverse arch of the barrel vault. The carved columns face east and west, the pipe-lines north and south. The effect of this grouping is remarkable, for the strength of the massive piers is set off by the soaring spring of the columns that support the roof. No less striking is the decoration of the side aisles. Five pairs of deeply recessed windows correspond with the five bays of the nave. Three slender engaged columns with decorated capitals divide the windows. These columns do not stop short and frame the windows in arcade fashion, but continue to the ground. Hence an effect that again repeats the soaring note struck by the church as a whole.

The nave takes up most of St. Hilaire. There is a very narrow choir, a small sanctuary, and a narrow ambulatory with three radiating chapels. What struck me in particular was the skill with which massive and light effects were combined in the grouping of the columns and piers. The exterior has the gay and joyous note common to the churches of the west. I have already mentioned the delightful appearance of the *chevet* working up to a belfry, with blind arcading over the transept crossing. The windows of the nave are carved with real magnificence,

of course in a series of arcades. The interior—and the same remark applies to the neighbouring church of St. Pierre—gave me a great impression of some Burgundian influence. For the pointed arch and the pipe-line are of course familiar features in Burgundy.

Over the north door at Melle there is an equestrian figure in a niched recess. I am not concerned with the merits of this particular statue, for it is in large part a feeble modern work, and horse and rider alike look tired and jaded. But these equestrian statues often decorate the churches of the west—there is one, by the way, at Aulnay—and they have a curious history. It is usual to find a little figure on the ground, trodden under foot by the horse. The name of Constantine is traditionally attached to the horseman, and the statues were generally regarded as commemorating the conversion of the first Christian emperor. Strzygowski claims an origin from Mesopotamia or Persia for the mounted saint, and states that a whole series of such figures were discovered by him in Armenia.* The splendid equestrian figure on the Barberini ivory in the Louvre tramples on a diminutive person. The figure under the horse was held to symbolise Paganism being overthrown by the champion of the new faith. I have spoken elsewhere of the influence of the pilgrimage routes on sculpture,† and this equestrian statue was probably introduced into France as a result of the pilgrimage to Rome. In former days such a statue (thought to be Constantine) stood in front of the ancient church of St. John Lateran. As the church had been connected with the emperor, nothing was more suitable than that pilgrims visiting the sights of Rome should pay homage to his statue. Their edification was not dashed by the surmise of a more critical age that the statue did not represent Constantine at all, but Marcus Aurelius trampling on some Barbarian tribe. However, equestrian statues known as Constantines became popular in the west of France during the twelfth century, and we are faced with the further problem as to why they should appear frequently in this area while remaining unknown in others. An interesting

* "Origin of Christian Church Art," p. 194 † See p. 48.

theory as to the origin of this particular form of church ornament was put forward in the Congrès Archéologique by Monsieur l'Abbé Noguès.* In his opinion, the explanation is to be sought in the family circumstances of two great Poitevin houses, the Lusignan and Maingot, lords of Melle and Surgères. They were not only powerful people, but founders and benefactors of churches. Constantine was a family name among them, and it is possible that they imported the idea of the Lateran statue from Rome and reproduced it locally; or, alternatively, that some neighbour, anxious to do honour to the reigning magnates, had the bright idea of decorating the church with a statue that bore the name of a son of the house. The theory is ingenious and may be correct, for the coincidence of a living Constantine in the same district is, to say the least of it, suggestive.

Melle covers an area that has little relation to its population. There is no short cut along the banks of the stream from St. Hilaire to St. Pierre, so there was nothing for it but to climb the hill again and find another road, equally winding and desultory, that led to St. Pierre. The local inhabitants held the view that it was natural to visit St. Hilaire, but perverse to visit St. Pierre, and I knocked on many doors and explored many byways, till a rosy-faced and smiling nun at last produced the key. Life must follow a tranquil and monotonous course in Melle, and the inhabitants were making the most of a minor excitement which was in full swing during my visit. Walking rather absent-mindedly down the road, I became conscious that all the neighbours were standing in their doorways, but that there was no one in the street except myself and a man moving rapidly in my direction, with shoulders bent and hands in his pockets. There was something about the gentleman's appearance that made me move with swift discretion into a doorway, giving him free passage in the road. As he vanished round one corner, a tall figure in a black soutane came round another and hurried up the road in pursuit. Tongues then wagged freely. All Melle seemed anxious to tell me a tale that

* "Congrès Archéologique, Saintes," p. 242.

proved ordinary enough in its main features. The hero had just given his wife a terrific beating, and, needless to say, controversy raged between the doorsteps as to whether or not she had deserved it. But Monsieur le Curé had the matter in hand, and he would put things right—a high tribute, I thought, to his capacities.

Having at last found the key, I made my way back to a neglected *place* with flowering chestnut trees, where stands the fine but damaged church of St. Pierre. The apse, with its radiating chapels, is very impressive, and Poitevin skill and cunning had framed the windows with a wealth of beautiful decoration. The south porch must have been a fine piece of work, but it is terribly mutilated. Little remains of the carving of the archivolts, surmounted by a band with the familiar theme of the Signs of the Zodiac. A mutilated figure of Christ in Glory crowns the whole. Monsieur le Curé, who had dealt with the wife-beating incident during the interval, joined me at this point. The news of a stranger had gone abroad, and he had hastened to St. Pierre to do the honours of his church. He was one of those admirable parish priests who are the strength and glory of the Catholic Church. Also he was a keen archæologist, with a critical appreciation of the treasures of Melle. He told me of the curious local festivities held at Whitsuntide, known as the Fête de la Bachelierie—an opposite number, apparently, to the Feast of St. Catherine, when girls declare loudly that the plaintive words, " Ah me ! when shall I marry me ?" have no meaning or value for them. In Melle it is a very old custom for the young men of the town to turn out on the occasion of the Fête de la Bachelierie and testify no less loudly to the virtues of single bliss. A monument to the unknown founder of these revels exists in the church. Most travellers welcome the chance that brings them to an old French town on market day, when streets, normally deserted, are crowded with peasants who have come in to buy and sell with the circumspection of their race. It might be very attractive, therefore, to visit Melle some Whitsuntide and look on at one of those local ceremonies, fast dying out, alas ! that take us back to an earlier and less sophisticated age than our own.

CHAPTER XXIV

ANGOULÊME AND CHÂTRES

I ONCE came across a happy phrase in a French book: "une église abadisée." The words may convey little meaning to a stranger who has no personal acquaintance with the churches of the west of France, but they acquire a horrid significance when you have deplored the new west front of St. Hilaire at Poitiers, groaned in spirit over the façade at Angoulême, and shed tears of rage in presence of St. Front at Périgueux. Monsieur Paul Abadie was a distinguished and respected gentleman in his day, so posthumous abuse, if it reaches him in the shades, must be all the harder to bear. Born in a decadent period of art, it was his destiny in the guise of a restoring architect to drain a cup of iniquity left half-filled by Norman pirates, Protestant zealots, and revolutionary fanatics. France has suffered so much from the violence and neglect which, turn by turn, have overtaken her monuments, that Abadie's efforts, well-intentioned though they were, appear as a final touch of injury decreed by ironic gods. Even granted the atrocious taste rampant in the middle of the nineteenth century, it is very hard to forgive the mixture of obtuseness and vanity that wrought such havoc at Angoulême and Périgueux. Great critics like Monsieur de Lasteyrie, Monsieur Michel, and Monsieur Mâle, show marvellous restraint in dealing with his performances, but their real feelings lie very near the surface. "Une restoration indiscrète," says one; "Une restoration désolante," says another; "Ces travaux n'étaient pas d'une impérieuse nécessité," remarks a third. So it is left for the rough foreigner like myself to dot the i's and cross the t's and talk bluntly of Monsieur Abadie's misdeeds. Self-confidence is an excellent virtue, but we are left breathless by the audacity that sets about, not merely to reconstruct, but to improve upon the plan and ideas of the twelfth-

[*Archives Photographiques, Paris.*

ANGOULÊME: BAS RELIEF OF GRYPHON.

[P. 340

century architects—to show, in fact, how much better they would have done their job had Monsieur Paul Abadie been at their elbow. Thanks to this deplorable notion, two of the most remarkable churches in France, St. Pierre at Angoulême and St. Front at Périgueux, are practically ruined. As both are of capital importance to any study of comparative archæology, the tragedy is the greater. True, both are clean and sound and spick and span—each at a distance cuts a fine figure of a church. But their value today is the value of a painting by an old master carefully scrubbed with soap and water and soda at spring-cleaning, and then liberally repainted by a local art student, who, being a person of spirit, has flung in a few new features to improve the original picture.

The cathedral church of St. Pierre at Angoulême is a large building in the form of a Latin cross, with a single nave covered by three vaults on pendentives. Four apsidioles radiate from the apse, all vaulted with semi-domes, and at the crossing of the nave and the transept there is a lantern tower with pierced windows crowned by a cupola. From the outside there is nothing to betray the presence of the vaults in the nave, as they are covered by a roof, but the domes on their heavy clustered piers are very impressive as one enters the church. Certain questions of relation and comparison invariably arise between the vaults of St. Pierre at Angoulême and those of St. Front and St. Étienne at Périgueux. I shall return, in a later chapter, to the whole question of the vaulted churches in Aquitaine and the controversies they have excited.

The cathedral at Angoulême is famous primarily for its façade, one of the greatest pages in sculpture left us by the Middle Ages.

Anonymity, as we have seen, shrouds the origin of many fine churches, but at Angoulême the veil lifts to reveal a great and tragic figure in the person of Gérard de Blaye, who became Bishop of Angoulême in 1101. A rich canon, by name Otier Archambaud, seems to have placed ample funds at his disposal, and, thanks to this benefaction, Gérard de Blaye rebuilt from its foundations an earlier church, consecrated in 1017. The new church was con-

secrated in 1128, though it is very unlikely that the whole building was finished by that date. Contrary to usual custom, there is some reason to think that the reconstruction began from the west end, as the westerly vault of the nave is more primitive in appearance than its fellows. But, at Angoulême as at Périgueux, Abadie's obliterating hand has wiped out a hundred indications precious to archæologists. Gérard de Blaye had been head of the Episcopal School at Périgueux before coming to Angoulême. He was a man of exceptional gifts and capacity and ruled as papal legate from Brittany to the Pyrenees. It is not clear how he became involved in the heavy troubles that clouded his latter days, but it is suggestive that he fell under the censure of St. Bernard, to whom great church builders were always suspect. Strife raged at the beginning of the twelfth century between the pope and the emperor, and Gérard, unfortunately for himself, backed the claims of the antipope Anacletus. Gerard died in a state of schism and was denied burial in his own cathedral.

There is reason to think that work on the façade was not finished when the bishop fell into disgrace, and that portions remained incomplete from that day till Abadie took matters in hand. Here again his wholesale restorations, new creations, and obliterations have destroyed the evidence that an unrestored building would have provided on many doubtful points. Abadie added on his own authority to the west façade at Angoulême an upper storey, consisting of two towers with pine-cone tops, a gable, and a whole series of blind arcades. He supplied a tympanum to the central door, though such tympana are incorrect in this district. Mutilated saints found themselves with restored heads, arms, and legs; carvings were smartened up, and a wealth of fresh ornament appeared to make good what had perished. Admittedly, the façade had been grievously mutilated, and the church as a whole needed repairs and preservation, as distinct from restoration. But the half-obliterated work of the twelfth century would have taught us more than the smartened-up west front of today.

As a sculptural page, St. Pierre must be regarded as one

of the great compositions of the twelfth century—even richer and more elaborate than the smaller façade of Notre Dame la Grande at Poitiers, happily intact. The good stone available was a premium on elaborate carving in the west of France. The façade at Angoulême is decorated on the Saintonge principle of superimposed zones. There are no less than seven of such zones, including Abadie's addition of the upper galleries. Archæologists have differed in their views as to the general meaning of this great composition, but it appears to represent the Ascension merging into a Last Judgment. The decoration is incredibly rich and varied. On the ground floor two blind arcades stand to right and left of the central door. The door and its decorations are modern, but the four tympana of the blind arcades are ancient and represent the twelve Apostles, in groups of three, setting out to preach the gospel. The figures of the Apostles (Peter can be recognised holding his keys) are full of movement. In the next zone we have the well-known bas relief of St. Martin sharing his coat with a beggar, and one of a knight on horseback trampling on a dragon—either St. George or a variant of the Constantine theme. St. Martin's dealings with the beggar, on the façade at Angoulême, always strike me as anything but friendly and charitable, but both these bas reliefs are practically new, and it is useless to waste time in criticising them. On the third zone are six arcaded recesses containing statues of saints with halos and bare feet, all looking upwards. The fourth and fifth zones are filled with figures, also in arcaded recesses, whose meaning is more obscure. I have heard them variously interpreted as doctors of the law, or as the damned expiating their sins in Hell—a discrepancy in point of view that points to a very uncertain iconography. The elect appear in delicious round medallions on the same level as the figure of the Saviour. So we arrive at the culminating point of the façade, Christ in Glory surrounded by emblems of the Evangelists; eight seraphims with wings outspread on the central archivolt, while below are a group of angels full of life and splendid action.

According to Monsieur Mâle,* this wonderful composition, so full of tumultuous life, " derives " from the tympanum of the Ascension at Cahors. At Cahors we find many of the same elements in the composition at Angoulême. There is the same breathless movement in the angels, especially the two angels upside down, who appear to be falling head first from the heavens. The figure of the Angoulême Christ in its aureole, the drapery of the long tunic, the gesture of the hands, is almost identical with the Cahors Christ. If this theory is correct, it proves yet again the far-flung influence of the School of Moissac. Cahors admittedly drew inspiration from the great Languedoc *atelier*, and at two removes the same influence reappears, so it would seem, at Angoulême.

The beautiful north tower of the cathedral was reconstructed by Abadie. How much of it is ancient, and how much follows his own ideas, I am unable to say. But as I have said so many disagreeable things about him in this chapter, and shall have more to say when we come to Périgueux, I seize the opportunity of praising the tower. It is beautiful and harmonious and a joy to look upon from whatever point it is seen. The south tower carried a Gothic spire, but it collapsed in 1569 after the damage done to the cathedral by the Protestants during the siege of Angoulême. Either through lack of funds or lack of spirit, Abadie failed to reconstruct this tower.

Apart from the cathedral and the Musée Archéologique, housed in what was once the bishop's palace, there is nothing of special interest to see in Angoulême. It is an attractive little town, perched, like Poitiers, on an outcrop of rock overlooking an extensive plain. The Charente flows through green meadows in the valley below, and from the splendid ramparts (now converted into a public promenade) that nearly encircle the town, there are wide views over the smiling countryside. After strenuous days in the villages of Poitou and the Saintonge the Hôtel de France is a Capua for weary archæologists, and, as such, I commend it to the attention of all intelligent travellers.

* " L'Art Religieux du 12ème Siècle," p. 399.

While one is at Angoulême a very attractive excursion can be made to Saintes, 69 kilometres to the west. I have already hinted at the smiling monotony of the landscape in the Saintonge, but as the motor-car carries one mile after mile amid green pastures and along the banks of slow-moving rivers, Biblical images of prosperity and contentment rise to the mind. What a large country France is, and how prosperous are her agricultural districts! The occasional hillocks and undulations in this flat country lend themselves to wide views and great perspectives. There is a very remarkable view of Angoulême from the road to Saintes. A small col is crossed, and, as one looks back Angoulême on its outcrop of rock, with fortifications falling into the valley below, has an astonishing resemblance to Athens, seen from the Daphne Pass. The whole of this Saintonge district is rich in church architecture. Here, as elsewhere, it is exasperating but inevitable that one is obliged to leave so many places unvisited. A pearl of great price, however, lies a short way off the road to Saintes—a neglected and desecrated church today, but still beautiful despite the decay into which it has been allowed to fall.

Châtres is not an easy place to find unless you know exactly where to look for it. It lies on a secondary road between Zarnac and Cognac, and you must badger the passers-by until they can show you the lane that leads to Châtres —it is well to tell them that you are looking for a disused church in a farmyard. I fell on a wet day, and it was under a dripping umbrella that I explored muddy lanes and ploughed fields before I found myself in front of the exquisite façade of what was once the abbey church of Notre Dame de Châtres. This was an Augustinian abbey founded in 1077 by a lord of Biring, Charente.* There is little or nothing to tell of it historically. As a religious house it fell on hard times before it was finally ruined by the wars of religion. The actual church was built about 1200, and is an interesting example of a Romanesque tradition persisting at a late date. The church has been allowed to fall into a lamentable state of neglect and decay.

* " Congrès Archéologique, Angoulême," 1912, p. 409.

It is desecrated and abandoned; all signs of worship have vanished from the interior, where carts and farming paraphernalia have been stored. Nothing, however, can destroy the beautiful proportions of the building itself. It is a small church of the Saintonge type, with no side aisles. The nave is roofed by three beautiful domes on pendentives framed by pointed arches. A fourth dome covers the transept crossing. Four engaged columns divide the wall space, with capitals decorated with dog-tooth moulding and billets. Châtres stands in the dawn of the Gothic, and the pointed arches of the nave and the ogival vaulting of the sanctuary prove that the unknown builder, however conservative his tradition, was not untouched by the new influence abroad.

The façade is one of the most gracious in the west of France. The façades of the Romanesque churches show, as we have seen, a great uniformity in style, and Châtres adheres to the main principles popular in the district—namely, horizontal zones of columns and arcades, divided by a cornice or by finely sculptured bands. There is a round arched portal with four archivolts, resting on richly decorated columns. These archivolts frame an inner band of curious horseshoe carving, known as *décoration polylobée*—a form of carving which to the best of my knowledge is peculiar to the Charentes. To right and left of the door are two blind arcades, and a beautiful frieze of scroll work runs across all this portion of the façade. On the first floor is a narrow window with two round archovolts resting on clustered columns. This window is flanked on each side by two elegant blind arcades with pointed arches carried on slender decorated shafts. The upper storey consists of a row of blind arches, nine in number, with pointed arches. Above this is a gable end, and the façade is framed by two large columns running from top to bottom. No description, however, can give the least idea of the beautiful and harmonious relation of these bands of blind arcading the one to the other. A great wealth of decoration covers this lovely façade, yet the whole impression is one of sobriety and restraint.

[*Archives Photographiques, Paris.*

CHÂTRES.

[P. 352

Structurally Châtres is fairly intact, and the carvings of the façade are in a good state of preservation. It would be no superhuman task to clear away the rubbish of the farmyard and restore the church to some sort of decency and order. Unfortunately, though we sin quite as heavily as our forefathers, we do not seek to expiate our misdeeds by fine architecture. Would not some guilty millionaire like to "make his soul" by restoring this old building, if not to worship, at least to the position of dignity and honour which it merits as a national monument?

CHAPTER XXV

SAINTES

I HAD the good fortune to visit Saintes on the occasion of a big fair. Few sights are more amusing than a French provincial town on one of the days when the whole countryside—men, women, and children—flock in for business and pleasure with their cattle and farm produce. Everyone looked prosperous, merry, and well dressed. The main street was lined with booths, where wares of all kinds were set out for sale. Business was brisk, but, needless to say, vendors and buyers being French, considerable chaffering and bargaining went on before any exchange of goods against cash took place. There were merry-go-rounds and swings and dancing and all the traditional fun of the fair. Cattle and sheep and horses jostled one another in the narrow streets. The little inn, where with difficulty I found a corner to eat my lunch, was full of country folk in their best clothes, dealing very justly with the food and the wine. Such a scene was like a curtain raised on the affairs of a more spacious and bucolic age than those of our difficult times. It is always a joy to realise how much of simple pleasure remains in the world and the mutual goodwill that can mark a crowd. I had made a long journey to see St. Eutrope, but it was with some reluctance that I tore myself from the fair to attend to archæology.

Saintes is a curious and interesting old town on the banks of the Charente. That placid, many-winding river is at this point on the last lap of its journey to the sea, for the coast is only a few kilometres distant. Saintes, no doubt, owes something of its antiquity to the presence of a navigable stream. A remote place today, it was not only a flourishing Roman city, but the most important Roman centre in the west of France. Sufficient traces remain of buildings, temples, and fortifications to bring home to the

traveller what the former glories of Saintes must have been. This great Roman background at Saintes was a surprise to me. I had come to see a famous Romanesque church. I found my thoughts diverted into classical channels. It was only by a happy accident that I discovered the Musée Lapidaire, with its splendid Gallo-Roman collection to which the Guide Bleu devotes a meagre and wholly inadequate notice. Walking down a street by chance, I passed the door of the Museum. Thinking it might contain some fragments of Romanesque sculpture, I hunted up the *gardien*, who proved a delightful exception to his class, being full of interest in his Museum and full of anxiety to show it to the passing stranger. To my amazement I found not Romanesque, but classical and Gallo-Roman sculptures of the highest quality. These noble fragments were found in the course of excavations along the line of the Roman ramparts, and they are very well set out in the local Museum.

Saintes was a city before the Roman invasion. It was the headquarters of the Santones—hence its name—when Julius Cæsar conquered Gaul. Under Roman rule Mediolanum, called Saintes by the conquerors, became an important centre. The Roman arch on the threshold of the town, the amphitheatre with seats for 20,000 people, the remains in the Museum prove that this was no mean place. It has, of course, experienced many vicissitudes. It was under the fear and pressure of Barbarian invasions that the Roman cities in Gaul were fortified at the end of the third century. The first Germanic invasions of Gaul began under the Emperor Valerian (A.D. 253) and created widespread panic. In 275-276 a terrible invasion took place, in the course of which seventy cities of Gaul were ravaged—probably Saintes among them. The emperors took energetic steps to counter this menace. At Saintes buildings were mercilessly destroyed in order to provide material for the new ramparts. Architectural remains were built into the foundations of the walls, which thus became archives of unedited documents of the first importance. Hence the splendid remains that came to light at Saintes during the course of excavations undertaken by the authorities. In the Museum

epitaphs of illustrious men—priests, quæstors, and soldiers —all belong to the first, second, and third centuries, and not to the period of Rome's decline. No inscription is later than the third century. Thus, strangely preserved, column, frieze, altar, and stele have reappeared to throw light on the art of the Gallo-Roman period.

The Roman and the Gallo-Roman city stood on the high ground above the river. Mediæval Saintes came down into the valley and spread itself along the banks of the Charente. Saintes, save on a fair day, must have few excitements to distract the even tenor of its ways. But the worn stones of its ancient buildings have echoed to many a shout of violence and battle. Century after century it was a city of bloodshed. Situated on the Roman road from Autun to Bordeaux, and in later times on one of the roads thronged by pilgrims to Compostela; situated, too, in that disputed march between the Langue d'Oeil and the Langue d'Oc, Saintes bore the brunt of every invasion and of the civil strife invasion almost invariably provokes. It was laid waste in turn by Barbarians, Saracens, Normans, and Visigoths. English kings and princes in former days carried fire and sword through this quiet French town. Conquered by Pépin le Bref, it followed the destinies of Guyenne, and, through Eleanor of Aquitaine, became a possession of the kings of England. Destroyed by Charles Alençon in 1330, it was ceded to England in 1360, and reconquered finally by Du Guesclin in 1371. The wars of religion raged in this district, and Saintes was to the fore in the disturbances of the Fronde. Yet in the Middle Ages its importance was religious rather than civil.

We know little or nothing of St. Eutrope, the semi-legendary figure who brought the Gospel to Saintes in the third century and became its first bishop. The date is obviously too early, but some tradition of high antiquity clings to Saintes. The cathedral of St. Pierre stands on the site of a very ancient church, though we may demur at the large claim made by a Bull of Pope Nicholas V., dated 1451, that it was the second oldest in the world. Henry II. of England and Eleanor of Aquitaine were pious founders of the cathedral, but the Romanesque church was recon-

structed in the Gothic style during the fifteenth century, and only two cupolas of the original building remain. It is a fine church, horribly maltreated by the Calvinists, who did their best to ruin the Flamboyant façade and flying buttresses. These same barbarians are equally responsible for the mutilation of St. Eutrope, whose nave was destroyed during the wars of religion. All that remains today is the choir, now the nave, and the arms of the transept that form a sort of narthex on entering the church. Little though we know of St. Eutrope, intense veneration attached to his remains, which were buried on this spot as early as the sixth century. In the eleventh century Geoffrey, Count of Poitiers, charged the Cluny monks with the care of the relics. A priory was founded to guard them, and the present church begun. The inspiration of Cluny, always puissant, led to the construction of a noble church designed by an architect named Benoît. Crowds of pilgrims flocked to Saintes, a halting-place on the road to Compostela, to visit the famous relics. After the place was pillaged by the Calvinists in 1568, the relics remained hidden till 1843, when they were restored to their place in the crypt. I must add that the chain of veneration and tradition remains unbroken. Whether or not the fair was responsible on the day of my visit for the large numbers of worshippers I cannot say. But I have seldom been in any place of worship in France where the atmosphere was so reverent and one's reluctance consequently to move about so great.

The outside decoration of the choir, with its radiating chapels, is in the best and richest manner of the west. The windows are framed in elaborate stone work, with columns, carved archivolts, and blind arcades. The apsidioles are adorned with long, slim columns (like the Burgundian pipe-lines) running from the roof to the ground. The reiterated description of these decorated exteriors in Poitou and the Saintonge may grow wearisome, but there is nothing wearisome about the churches themselves. Built on the same plan, and following the same general rules, each has its own individuality; each brings variety and some new example of beauty to the general content of Romanesque art. So it is with St. Eutrope, where

no student will be in haste to abandon the beautiful exterior.

But the master feature of St. Eutrope, after all, is not the decoration of the *chevet*, fine though it is. The main interest lies in the superb crypt, which, after Chartres, is the largest in France. When the upper church was in large measure sacked and destroyed, the crypt, like that of St. Bénigne at Dijon, was filled with rubbish and remained in that condition till the middle of the nineteenth century. Hence the preservation of the marvellous historiated and other capitals it contains. Few sights in France are more remarkable than this eleventh-century crypt, with its great reinforcing arches, at once savage and imposing, holding up the groined vaulting of the side aisles. The plan of the crypt corresponds exactly with that of the upper church. It is astonishingly well lit, and for this reason the mediæval sculptor possibly felt it worth while to lavish so great a wealth of work on the capitals that support the reinforcing arches. These capitals are among the finest extant examples of Romanesque carving. The themes are many and varied—splendid scroll work, with decorated ribbons, foliage capitals of beautiful design, fantastic capitals of heads peeping out of a setting of leaves and flowers—truly the finger of Cluny has touched this place into beauty and power.

There are some interesting capitals in the entrance (once the transept) of the upper church. The popular subjects of the Weighing of Souls and of Daniel in the Lions' Den are to be found here, also a very remarkable capital of fantastic animals often reproduced in architectural books. Two birds of prey have alighted each on the back of a quadruped and are attacking it with their beaks. The capital at Saintes is a spirited example of a decorative theme that, common enough in Romanesque sculpture, belongs to the childhood of the world. It is one of the many designs that reached mediæval Europe through strange byways. Fantastic animals engaged in deadly struggle appear in contemporary Arab and Mussulman art, and were equally popular in both East and West. Ivory boxes and goldsmiths' work, made for the Khalifs of Cor-

doba, no doubt found their way into France, and were used as models by the monks and their sculptors.

Both East and West drew in the main on Oriental textiles for these designs, and the textiles in turn reproduced themes of great antiquity. Fighting animals and birds appear on the monuments of Assyria and Chaldea, and in the Louvre I have found bowls and seals from Susa decorated with long spidery animals, both interlaced and affronted, that belong to a period of 3,000 to 2,500 years B.C. The fidelity of the East through the centuries to the theme of fighting animals is well illustrated by the splendid Persian hunting-carpets that are among the great possessions of the Victoria and Albert Museum. It is the transference of these same ideas on to the capitals of the churches of the twelfth century that constitutes so strange and so suggestive a chapter in the history of sculpture. It is through many vicissitudes that the fighting animals of Mesopotamia, possessing, it may be, some ritual significance in the savage cult of a remote age, have been handed down to Christian art.

Saintes has yet another fine church in the abbey of Ste. Marie des Dames, founded in 1047 by Geoffrey Martel, Count of Anjou, and Agnes of Burgundy, his wife. It was a nunnery frequented by ladies of high quality and, up to the Revolution, counted thirty abbesses belonging to illustrious French families. Many echoes of secular life—possibly not unwelcome—must have disturbed the cloistered existence of these ladies, for warfare, as we saw, was for many centuries a chronic condition in Saintes. But Ste. Marie des Dames is a desolate place today. The church has ceased to exist as a place of worship, and now stands bare and stricken in a barrack square. The monastic buildings have been pulled down to find quarters for the soldiers. Nothing remains today but the façade and the fine belfry over the transept crossing. The belfry consists of a square tower decorated on each face with blind arcades. The tower carries a drum with twelve pierced windows, and the whole is crowned by a cone pyramid of the type familiar in this district. The façade, though it has suffered severely, is one of the most famous in the west of

France. Like Aulnay, it consists of a central door with two blind doors to right and left. The central door has no less than eight archivolts, with a sculptured figure or design on each keystone. Personally I must confess I weary a little of this minute decoration, for, however rich the ensemble, it has to conform willy-nilly to the exigencies of the arch and the number of stones it contains. Here, as at Aulnay, the sculptor was in difficulties with the Elders of the Apocalypse, whose numbers have swollen from twenty-four to fifty-three. Another archivolt deals with the Massacre of the Innocents, and murderers and innocents for the same reason all appear much the same size. I do not think this façade, even when unmutilated and set off to better advantage than at present, could have compared with the portal at Aulnay. At Aulnay the genius of the sculptor triumphs over the somewhat difficult technique of the highly decorated archivolt. In lesser hands the reiteration of little figures and foliage designs becomes monotonous. Ste. Marie des Dames is, however, an interesting example of the interpenetration of schools, for, though in the Saintonge, it is built on the Poitevin plan of an equal number of arcades on both the first floor and the ground floor, whereas Notre Dame la Grande at Poitiers is built on the Saintonge plan of multiple arcades on the first floor.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE DOMED CHURCHES OF AQUITAINE

Domed churches, both large and small, especially domes on pendentives, are, as we have seen in the previous chapters, often found in that part of France known historically as the duchy of Aquitaine. This method of vaulting did not entirely supersede the barrel and the groined vault, but the two architectural forms exist side by side in the district. Our survey of ecclesiastical architecture in the south-west of France would not be complete without some account of the dispute that raged for many years about the origin of the dome. Many Romanesque churches in different parts of France have a cupola over the transept crossing that carries the belfry. These cupolas were generally raised on squinches. But in Aquitaine domes on pendentives were so much in favour that their use was extended from the belfry to the nave. When this plan is adopted the nave is divided into so many square compartments, each covered by a dome. Naturally such buildings have no side aisles, and the construction lends itself in a large church to ample and severe proportions. The problem presented by the dome is how to pass from the square to the round. This is overcome either by the use of squinches, little half-vaults inserted in the angles of the square space to be covered by the dome; or by pendentives, triangular flaps built into the angles of the square with the points hanging downwards. Each squinch carries a little wall, thus transforming the square into an octagon on which it is easy to raise a cupola. When pendentives are used, the head of each flap is so adjusted that the four together form a perfect circle. Domed churches on pendentives are found almost exclusively in Périgord, Angoumois, and Saintonge. To what influence may we attribute this curious development ?

The answer to this question has been hotly contested by two schools of archæologists. In the middle of the nineteenth century the theory which held the field was one advanced by Monsieur Félix de Verneilh, who claimed that all the domed churches in Aquitaine were derived from St. Front at Périgueux, a remarkable building in the form of a Greek cross with cupolas on each arm and in the centre. St. Front, he stated, was built by a Greek architect on the plan of St. Mark's at Venice. Since St. Mark's is incontestably a Byzantine church, the Oriental origin of the domes in Aquitaine seemed proved. According to de Verneilh, St. Front was begun at the end of the twelfth century by the famous Bishop Frotaire and was consecrated in 1047. It was therefore not only the oldest domed church in the west, but the prototype of all the other domed churches in France.

This theory, blessed and accepted by Viollet Le Duc, was, in course of time, handled roughly by a younger school of archæologists. New and disconcerting facts had come to light about various buildings that had been cited in support of de Verneilh's view. New excavations had proved that St. Mark was remodelled and covered with cupolas for the first time in the second half of the eleventh century. Further, a disastrous fire, in which many lives were lost, destroyed St. Front in 1120. De Verneilh met this difficulty by the suggestion that only the monastery and not the church was burnt. His brother, who had entered the lists in defence of the family theory, though forced to abandon the position that St. Mark was the prototype of St. Front, still claimed that St. Front was begun in the tenth century under the direction of a Byzantine architect. Monsieur Brutails, Monsieur de Lasteyrie, and an English archæologist, Mr. Phenie Spiers, have all offered uncompromising resistance to de Verneilh's ideas. Brutails held that St. Front was built in the twelfth century, after the great fire, and was the product of a well-established local school, though possibly the design was copied from a foreign church. Spiers went further, and declared that there was nothing Byzantine about the domed churches of Aquitaine, and that the pendentives are a

local product built in the French manner. The sculpture and the capitals of St. Front were not Byzantine, but late Romanesque work of the twelfth century. According to Spiers, mediæval French architects had been experimenting with domes for a hundred years before St. Front was built. So far from being the prototype, this great church was the last culminating example of the style.

Monsieur de Lasteyrie* shares Mr. Spiers's view. He, too, will not hear of Byzantine influence. Pendentives, he says, were known in France since the days of the Romans, and there are fundamental differences between the French and the Byzantine method of construction.† All these points, and others still more technical, are illustrated by St. Front, and when set out in battle array their culminative effect proved very damaging to the theories of the Orientalists.

Poor de Verneilh's views crumbled before the massed batteries opened on them. The Venetians and the Byzantines retreated into the background. Proofs continued to accumulate in support of the attacking archæologists. Mr. Spiers thought that the master mason of St. Front might have visited St. Mark's at Venice, and reproduced the main plan of that famous church. But since then even the Greek cross has been jettisoned at St. Front. The design is now held to be accidental, and determined more by a wish to save the fine tower of the earlier Latin church than from any desire to imitate St. Mark. In a word, St. Front is regarded today as the product of an indigenous local school that owes neither more nor less to Byzantine influences than other French churches of the Romanesque period.

* "L'Architecture Religieuse en France à l'Epoque Romane," p. 465 *seq.*

† The Byzantine cupola, for instance, has lights in the drum; in South-Western France the cupola springs direct from the ring and has no lights. Byzantine pendentives are carried on round arches, French pendentives on pointed arches. I hesitate to launch myself into the highly technical and difficult phraseology concerned with the extrados and intrados of the arch, a detail that always crops up in any discussion about the dome. Suffice it to say that architectural principles concerned with the spring of the pendentives from the voussoirs are not applied in the same way in Aquitaine as they are in a Byzantine church, and this difference constitutes an important element in the controversy.

Comparative archæology has thrown some interesting light on the disputed date of the construction of St. Front. At Périgueux itself, the old church of St. Étienne, half destroyed though it was by the Protestants, retains two cupolas that are of great importance in this controversy. These domes offer many points of resemblance not only with those of St. Front, but also with the domes of the cathedral at Angoulême. Now Gérard de Blaye, the great bishop who built the cathedral at Angoulême, came, as we saw,* to Angoulême from Périgueux, and remained in close touch with the episcopal school at St. Étienne. We know that the cathedral at Angoulême was begun in the first quarter of the twelfth century, and the resemblances in structure between the dome at the west end of the nave at Angoulême and those of St. Étienne and St. Front are too numerous to be accidental. It is reasonable, therefore, to attribute these three buildings approximately to the same date, and, so far as Angoulême is concerned, the date is known with some exactness. But for Abadie's disastrous restoration of St. Front, many of these questions could have been answered with greater ease. The town of Périgueux, dominated by the five great cupolas of its church, is a most surprising sight when it first comes into view. The whole effect is bizarre and Oriental in the extreme. But, alas! both within and without, Abadie has done his damnedest—no other word is possible. Listen for a moment to Mr. Spiers's account of his evil deeds. "Pointed arched vaults, which carried pendentives, were originally struck from a level below the impost mouldings, so the height of the arch was only a little greater than the half-span of the arch. Abadie thought this appearance debased, so he raised them, springing them 21 inches above the impost level instead of 15 inches below. He replaced the shallow east apse by an enormous Romanesque apse of his own design; he raised the cupolas and lanterns, adding, as at Angoulême, pinnacles and pine cones according to his fancy."†

In the modernised well-scrubbed interior of St. Front,

* P. 348.

† Phenie Spiers, "Architecture East and West," p. 170.

nothing is left of its great past but the noble proportions of the ground plan. Whatever its origin or inspiration, St. Front was a unique church in Western Europe, and it is a little difficult to write calmly of the errors of taste and style that have blotted out an architectural document of the highest value.

From all this it will be seen that little or nothing is left today of de Verneilh's theory. But, granted that St. Front is a twelfth-century church, have Oriental ideas in any way influenced the domed churches of Aquitaine? That seems to me a very different question, and one to which no dogmatic negative is possible. That great scholar and archæologist Monsieur de Lasteyrie has perhaps one foible—the thought is always a little unwelcome to him that France has ever had occasion to draw on foreign sources for inspiration in her architecture. The Romans were in Gaul, the Romans used domes, squinches, and pendentives; that, in his opinion, is sufficient to account for their reappearance in the twelfth century.

With great diffidence, I venture to doubt whether this view does not err as much in one direction as the fantastic theories of the extreme Orientalists in another. To suggest that the domed churches of Aquitaine were copied from Sassanian buildings in Persia, or that the Crusaders (generally busy men engaged in loot) spent their time taking measurements of churches in the East, are exaggerations whose absurdity is obvious. But I find it equally hard to believe that no influence, direct or indirect, from the East stimulated the eager minds of the mediæval builder. Domed buildings have existed from a time of high antiquity in Persia, and the squinch is claimed to be of Iranian origin. The Byzantine Empire in its church architecture discarded all other forms of vaulting in favour of the dome. Pilgrims, travellers and soldiers would have seen these domes not only in Constantinople but in Asia Minor and the countries that border the eastern shores of the Mediterranean. Communication, as I have often had occasion to point out in this book, was far more general than we are apt to realise, and Oriental ideas flowed freely into the West. The streets of Limoges today preserve the memory of a Venetian

settlement that existed there in mediæval times. Limoges provides an obvious link between Venice and Périgord, without advancing theories of master masons sent from Western France to take measurements at the church of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople, another suggested prototype for St. Front.

But if travellers to the East did not go about with a foot rule and tracing paper, the domes of St. Mark, of St. Sophia, and of other fine churches in the Holy Land might well have excited their admiration. Here and there a spirited and intelligent man may have been fired with a desire to reproduce in his own land a form of vaulting novel in Western Europe. During the Great War working men from our large cities, agricultural labourers from remote country districts, were flung by the hazard of battle into the far ends of the earth, and saw strange sights and places, whose impression on the thoughtful-minded must have been profound. In the twelfth century the Crusades led to movements of population that left a mark no less deep on mediæval Europe. When a man's body travels in space, if he has a mind at all it does not stay at home. New ideas are planted in his consciousness, and these bear fruit in due season. It is along the following lines that I, for one, seek a solution of this vexed problem. Architects and builders from France went on Crusade and on pilgrimage as well as other folk, and were profoundly impressed by domed churches seen in the East. Hence an effort to reproduce an Oriental idea, which, for some reason we shall never know, took special root in Aquitaine. "Les architects du sud-ouest de la France ont été à la période romane hantés par la coupole," writes Monsieur Bernaud.* It must be remembered that from the structural point of view the dome had many practical advantages to offer to men deeply preoccupied with the problems of thrust and stability. Thanks to its circular form, its pressure on the side walls was less terrific than that of the barrel or the groined vault. The use of a dome reduced the difficulties of vaulting to that of assuring the stability of the piles which carried the dome.

* "Congrès Archéologique, Angoulême," p. 119.

Architecture was not governed by formulas in the twelfth century. The mediæval builders were groping and experimenting, each school developing its own ideas and contributing some principle to the common stock. The pendentives of the domed churches were not built on any cut-and-dried plan superintended by experienced architects from the East, but were evolved on local lines. Their resemblance to Byzantine pendentives is to a great extent superficial. Whatever similarity they presented in appearance, there was little or none in execution. The construction was fundamentally different. The Byzantine Empire was the home of mosaic and cupolas, and pendentives were built in rubble and then covered with the magnificent decoration which is the glory of the famous church of St. Mark's at Venice. The French architects, on the contrary, built their pendentives in dressed stone, on different principles from the rough material that underlay the outer coat of mosaic in the Byzantine churches of the East. As I see it, the inspiration and the idea of the domed churches in Aquitaine came from the East; their execution was purely French and worked out on the spot by local architects and builders. Experiments began in the eleventh century, but the style did not reach its full development until the twelfth. From Périgord and Angoûmois the fashion in domed churches spread to neighbouring provinces —in the south to Souillac, Cahors, and Moissac, and possibly to Bordeaux; in the north to Fontevrault, Nantes, and the banks of the Loire. North of the Loire in Anjou the movement was checked by a new current of ideas radiating from Île de France. Though the cupolas offered advantages over the barrel vault, the ogival vault with ribs independent of the dome still further simplified construction, and was a more tractable principle to handle. Against the mighty competitor of the nascent Gothic the dome, as a method of vaulting, could not hold its own. It merged into the ogival vault—a fusion for which the Angevin architects were largely responsible.

PART VI

PROVENCE

CHAPTER XXVII

AVIGNON AND THE BRIDGE BUILDERS

PROVENCE and Languedoc, the beautiful and fertile provinces whose shores stretch round the Gulf of Lions, have attracted adventurous spirits to themselves since the far-off days when men first went down to the sea in ships.

Greeks, Romans, Goths, Saracens, all have come and gone as conquerors or settlers. Carthaginian and Saracen have swept along the famous coast road between the Aude and the Rhone on invasions that mark epochs in history. Barbarians and Germanic tribes followed the waters of the Rhone on its long journey through Central France in search of territories more smiling than their own. A procession of mighty ghosts and the greatest among them is Rome.

Provence was the earliest province to be colonised in Gaul. In temper, in outlook, in natural gifts, Southern France has little or nothing in common with the north, beyond the chances and changes of the stormy history that slowly welded them into one land. We think of it as the land of the *gai savoir* and the Langue d'Oc, of troubadour and lady, of castles and courts of love. It is more easy here than elsewhere to shut our eyes to the darker sides of the Middle Ages and to dwell on romantic records of culture and of long arguments over rhythm and verse. Life, so it seems to us, as pictured in the pages of the old chronicles, must have been as gay and as brilliant as the southern sun overhead. And the setting was worthy of the life. There are few parts of France more romantic than Provence, and much of it is still unspoilt.

Here within small compass you have a great diversity of scenery—plain and mountain, river and valley, green fields and marsh, flowers and arid stone-strewn waste. Though the strip along the coast, with its large and noisy hotels, rests

like a blight on the seaboard, the tumult and the shouting die away as you go inland. Once clear of the littoral you can revel in the charm and originality of this gracious country of sunshine and flowers, where the last spurs of the Alps fall away into the sea, and the Rhone hurries forward to meet the blue waters of the Mediterranean.

Spring is a season of indescribable beauty. Little towns, grey and scarred as the crags they crown, rise from a sea of pink blossom. Rain may pour down one moment, but it only serves to wash the sky a still deeper blue and to leave the mountains aglistening and aglow. Every hedgerow is green and delicious, every orchard a sheet of snow where the cherry shakes her tufts of white blossom at the passer-by. Olive-yards lie cool and grey under the hottest sun, and here and there the dark branches of the cypress tree rise spire-like against a blue sky. The olive is a demure tree and, in a land of sunshine and riotous wind, does not forget that she is the emblem of the wise goddess Athena and must behave herself in seemly fashion. Like her brother the ilex, she faces the seasons unchanged, for the dark evergreen and the Quaker-like ever-grey stand to their posts throughout the year. The deciduous trees may droop and wither later on, but in the spring they are all loveliness as plane and chestnut and Spanish oak come into flower. Plane trees overhead, vine stumps below are both hard at work coaxing their woolly balls to uncurl and stretch themselves in the sun. Sometimes a sheet of yellow jonquils will turn a meadow into gold, and, as you pass from plain to hill, Alpine flowers riot on the lower slopes of the mountains.

The dwelling-houses in this land of enchantment have colour and quality of their own. The Provençal farm, known as *mas* in the local speech, lies like an island in an ocean of verdure. They are generally high-walled buildings with a tourelle, surrounded by clumps of pine and ilex, whose shade must be a matter of no small importance during the torrid summer heat. There is still an echo of defence about the solid walls, and the tourelle, though serving in these days the peaceful ends of a pigeon-cote, is a legacy from a more troubled age. The walls are often

painted pink or yellow, and shimmer in the sunlight against the sombre tones of the ilex. The very sunshine sparkles as though invigorated by its eternal wrestle with the Mistral, the great wind of the south, which sweeps and shouts and roars across the land when it escapes, tempest-like, from the bag of Æolus, most turbulent of all his sons. With the Mistral, when the fit is on him, there is no argument. He triumphs, and you must leave it at that. But, exhausting though his outbreaks, once over he leaves behind him no sense of grudge. The sun, wise and tolerant, shines with renewed splendour after the frolic of his gay companion, for sun and Mistral are comrades in the south, and understand each other perfectly. When peace is restored, the one makes good the dust and disturbance of the other and sees to it that earth and sky glow like the jewels in a shrine.

Avignon is in a special sense the portal of this southern land, holding as she does the keys of the two famous provinces that border the Rhone Valley—Provence on the left bank and Languedoc on the right. From it you can visit all manner of interesting places: Orange, with its Roman remains; the Roman arches at St. Rémy and the incredible town of Les Baux; Vaucluse, with its memories of Petrarch and Laura, Tarascon, Arles, Montmajour. From Avignon you can push on south through Nîmes and the Camargue to Montpellier, which is in turn the gateway of the Pyrenees, and opens out a new cycle of adventure.

In my peevish moments I am inclined to say that Avignon is not the place it used to be. Twenty, even fifteen, years ago it was one of the most delightful towns in Europe, well known, of course, and duly visited by decorous tourists. But you were not pushed and jostled as you are today—thanks to the overcrowding on the Riviera. For since more people flock year by year to the coast, and the P.L.M. refuses firmly to put on adequate trains to take them home, they overflow in their hordes at Avignon, where they break the night and fight and struggle for a seat on the train the next morning.

Avignon has been described a hundred times, and, though its cathedral is Romanesque, I do not propose to

linger over its sights or the Palace of the Popes, spruce and imposing as it has emerged from the hand of the restorer. Let me beg you, however, to refresh your memory with Daudet's enchanting story of La Mule du Pape before you ascend the Rocher des Doms to admire the splendid view where Alps and Cevennes call to one another across the wide valley of the Rhone. From this vantage-point you will pay too, I hope, your tribute to the great spirit of St. Catherine. For surely she is one of the most astonishing women in history, this daughter of a humble Sienese wool-dyer, who ended the Great Schism of Christendom and carried back a reluctant pope and a crowd of protesting cardinals, sorely against their will, from Avignon to Rome.

It is on the right bank of the Rhone and among the cities of the Camargue that we shall find the great examples of Romanesque architecture known as Provençal, and at Avignon I halt but for a moment to speak of the twelfth-century bridge, made famous by a little song that has set children dancing all the world over—

> "Sur le Pont d'Avignon
> L'on y danse tous en rond"—

though, when you see the bridge, it is difficult to understand how the "beaux messieurs" and the "dames" of the song, whose courtly gestures we were taught to act in the nursery, could ever dance on the narrow fairway except and in so far as the Mistral blew them across willy-nilly. Baring-Gould has suggested that dancing on bridges has a mythological origin, and that the familiar song of the Pont d'Avignon is an echo of some Pagan custom by which one child in a dancing chain would be thrown over the bridge in order to propitiate the river below. The old song, "London Bridge is broken down, Dance over my Lady Lea," has an echo of the same idea. Let us hope, despite the Higher Criticism, that the song of the Avignon bridge has an origin less sinister.

The making of the bridge, so runs the legend, was after this manner: Benezet or Petit Benoît was a shepherd lad, not only of lowly birth but of lowly stature, who kept his flock in the mountains of the Vivarais. To him one day

Jesus Christ appeared with the order that he should go to Avignon and build a bridge across the Rhone, for the lack of which many travellers were perishing. Petit Benoît was appalled at the mission laid upon him—who was he, an ignorant shepherd boy, to build bridges and proclaim the will of Jesus Christ to the great folk of Avignon? But Benoît, though daunted by the task, did not fail in obedience. He proceeded to Avignon, and before the scandalised bishop and other ecclesiastics assembled in the cathedral, announced that God had ordered him to build a bridge across the Rhone. Clerical indignation was great that a poor and ignorant peasant should dare to claim that he had been called upon to fulfil a divine mission. But in this hour of trial Benezet's position was fortified by a miracle. He was given the strength to pick up a block of stone twenty times as large as himself. This block he carried to the banks of the river, and with it laid the first stone of the bridge. After that there was nothing more to be said about Benezet, but to build the bridge as he directed and to canonise him at his death.

So much for legend. But the order of the Frères Hospitaliers Pontifes, of which the real Benezet was probably the head, was one of the most interesting institutions of the Middle Ages. This confraternity of bridge builders arose in Southern France during the second half of the twelfth century and was recognised by Pope Clement III. in 1159. They were not regular monks bound by monastic vows, but a body of men pledged to the task of bridge building, the care of ferries, and helping travellers across fords and dangerous river passages. At each bridge or ford they established a rest house and hospital, where travellers and invalids could find help and protection. Similar brotherhoods, apparently, grew up in other parts of France and in the north of Italy, but the order was Provençal in its origin, and seems to have sprung from the needs of a country where the Rhone and other rapid streams, liable to great changes of level, rendered communication precarious and difficult.

There is something very attractive about this order of bridge builders, pledged to the care of travellers and the

keeping of fords. The Frères Pontifes were not scholars, but, in an age strangely compounded of violence and piety, a band of good, hard-working, helpful men—than which can be no higher praise. They had their headquarters at the abbey of Maupas on the Durance—changed to Bonpas after that violent and fickle stream was bridged. The more formidable enterprise of the bridge at Avignon was built by them between 1178 and 1188. The order must have included engineers of considerable technical skill, in view of the difficulties presented by the Rhone. Benezet's bridge was a great feat for the twelfth century. It stretched for nearly a thousand yards from the Rocher des Doms on the left bank to Villeneuve on the right. It had a roadway 16 feet wide and twenty-two semi-circular arches, of which only four remain. The arches rested on great piles of masonry pointed so as to resist the pressure of the flood water. Before the days of reinforced concrete and the apparatus of modern engineering, how was it possible to lay the foundations of the bridge in the deep and swiftly flowing waters of the Rhone? Little wonder that popular imagination took refuge in a miracle. The architect probably drew both counsel and inspiration from the great Roman aqueduct of the Pont du Gard near Nîmes: there are similarities about the arches that cannot be accidental. Until the Pont St. Esprit was built in 1309, Pont St. Benezet was the only stone bridge across the Rhone between Lyons and the sea. Naturally, when built, it conferred immense importance on Avignon. Roads from all parts of Southern France converged at this point and brought trade and custom with them. Unhappily, too, it became the storm centre of every siege and battle—and there were many—that raged in Provence.

The bridge has suffered severely in the course of centuries: first from the chronic warfare between pope and king, and then from the disturbances of a later age. It was cut in 1226 in an attack on the town made by the King of France. It was cut again during the long siege at the end of the fourteenth century, when Rodrigo de Luna, the anti-pope, held Avignon for many months against all comers. Badly repaired after these trials, little by little

the famous bridge gave way. For some time the gaps between the arches were bridged by wooden struts and planks. Finally, in 1680, all attempts to save it from complete ruin were abandoned. The bridge became a pawn in a long-drawn-out quarrel between the civil and ecclesiastical powers; then Louis XIV., whose interventions were unfortunate both here and, as we shall see, in the Camargue, thought fit to decree that no further repairs should be undertaken. The present fragment of the Pont St. Benezet was refashioned with elliptical arches—some say in the thirteenth century, others in the fifteenth century. The pitch of the original bridge was too low, and it was raised subsequently to its present level. The tiny Romanesque chapel built on the bridge itself, at a point where one arch touches a piece of rock, was also refashioned with a Gothic upper storey. The chapel was dedicated to St. Nicholas, patron of boatmen, and here the bones of St. Benezet were laid to rest, when the good bridge builder had crossed a wider stream than the Rhone.

The Frères Hospitaliers Pontifes built the celebrated bridge of the St. Esprit across the Rhone near La Croisière. Like the Avignon bridge, it did not run straight across the stream, but was bent at an obtuse angle, so as to resist the pressure of the rapid waters of the Rhone. The order was active for nearly three centuries, until dissolved by Pius II. In its later years it did not escape the twin scourges of monasticism—idleness and luxury—and Benezet's successors fell away from the ideal of unremitting toil left by the founder. The brotherhood of Bonpas was united with the order of the Knights of St. John in 1265. As the power of the civil authority grew, there was less necessity for religious confraternities to keep guard over fords and build bridges. But the Frères Pontifes have left a gracious memory in the annals of the twelfth century, and such fragments of Romanesque bridges as survive make it clear that the men who built the abbeys were no less daring and successful in dealing with civil architecture.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE CAMARGUE AND ROMAN ARLES

The tide of a vigorous life has ceased for centuries to flow through the cities of the Camargue, forgotten or half-forgotten as they are today. But they are haunted by great memories. Before the reign of Philip Augustus the centre of gravity in France lay in the south rather than in the north. Great events, as we know, were played out on this scene. Christianity in Gaul had its humble beginnings in the south; early French culture had its cradle in Provence and Languedoc. Throughout this long history we find the Rhone an agent of the first importance in making conditions that react on the lives of men and women. The influence of geography on history is never more marked than when we are dealing with rivers, a fact to which the coast of Southern France bears ample witness. The early civilisation of both Languedoc and Provence—especially Languedoc—was very largely determined by the course of the Rhone and that of the minor streams falling into the Mediterranean from the Cevennes.

The Rhone, like many other great rivers, breaks up into a delta before reaching the sea. On its long journey from the parent Alps it washes down vast quantities of mud and detritus carried away originally from the hills. The same process is repeated by the lesser rivers, like the Hérault and the Aude, that pour their waters into the Gulf of Lions. A river entering the flat land of its delta has lost the rapidity of motion that makes it possible to carry mud and stones in solution so long as a current flows swiftly from high ground to low. Hence the gradual silting up of river mouths, especially where there are no tides to keep the channels clear. All along the Gulf of Lions, from the Spanish border to a point near Marseilles, we find a line of sandbanks open on the south to the sea, while within the

barrier thus formed great lagoons of water and marsh stretch for many miles. Some of the lagoons communicate by passages known as " graus " with the open sea. When this happens they remain relatively healthy. But if these openings silt up, then the main lagoon becomes a fever-ridden swamp. Cities decay and men perish.

Geological processes are in the main measured by ages, but local areas affected by river deltas have undergone great changes within historical times. Languedoc, the province lying on the right bank of the Rhone, was in classical times pre-eminently a country of routes and passages. In this respect it differed considerably on its seaboard from Provence, the sister province on the left bank of the Rhone. The Rhone is a capricious stream, and has changed its course on many occasions. Each caprice influences the fortunes of the inhabitants. Water given, water withdrawn: on these things hangs prosperity or failure. The district east of Marseilles—known as the Riviera—is a hilly country, where rocks and mountains come down close to the shore. The lagoons that ring the Gulf of Lions—west of Marseilles—consequently have no existence. Long ago, in geological not historical times, the Rhone carried down and deposited the great pebble-bed of La Cran, which lies like a miniature Sahara south of the Alpilles, on the road to Marseilles. But on the right bank not only was the flat seaboard of Languedoc subject to the full influence of the Rhone and its inundations, but the long stretch of plain between the Cevennes and the coast provided a district over which waters overflowed at will. On the high ground one of the great roads of history passed through Languedoc, the Heraclian or Domitian Way. But the canalised route of the lagoons, protected by the intervening ridge of sand from the violence of the sea, yet communicating with the open Mediterranean through the different " graus," was another element of great importance in the early colonisation of the country. Within the lagoons the primitive navigators who adventured on the stormy waters of the Mediterranean in their frail ships could find protection and anchorage. Few countries have had so many and varied points of contact with other lands

in classical times as Languedoc. And this fact was due to the special character of her seaboard.

The Rhone divides into two main branches just above Arles, and the great delta thus formed is known by the name of the Camargue. Once an inland lake, it is now part marsh, part cultivated land. The silting up of the coastline is a process that can be measured appreciably from century to century. Not only in classical times, but during the Middle Ages, large districts now more or less reclaimed land were under water. Consequently they were much more healthy than in the present transitional state of marsh. We do not hear of fever in Roman times: Arles was looked upon as one of the granaries of the empire and the centre of a district known as the Breasts. As time went on, however, the combined action of sea and river slowly but surely did its work. Once the free passage of water from lagoon to sea is interrupted by the silting up of the channels, the lagoons become stagnant, with disastrous consequences to health.

Many writers assert that Louis XIV., with the best of intentions, completed the ruin of the district by damming the banks of the Rhone and checking the annual inundations that swept the stagnant waters from the inland pools. The Rhone, compelled to follow a more or less orderly course within dykes, could neither reach and drain the swamps, nor deposit its layer of mud over the fields—a deposit quite as valuable as that brought down in Egypt by the annual inundation of the Nile. But rivers cannot be left to stray about a country at will, especially a river so capricious as the Rhone. Scientific irrigation will no doubt in time overtake the situation, for in the Rhone Delta, as much as in the Nile Delta, the value of drained and irrigated land is more and more appreciated.

The Languedoc seaboard in its long history has gone through three distinct phases. There is first the water phase, when sea and lagoon flow freely one into the other, and large areas are wholly or partially submerged; next comes the marsh phase, when, by the closing of the "graus," the interior lagoons are cut off from the sea, and their stagnant and rotting waters make human habitation practically

impossible; next comes the phase of reclamation, when the marsh has dried up and agriculture becomes possible again. The Camargue is now entering on this third phase. The scientific reclamation of the soil is being actively carried on with, let us hope, ultimate reactions on the climate and the life of the inhabitants. This strange district of 300 square miles in extent is a place apart and has a beauty and individuality all its own. Cultivation flourishes side by side with great stretches of salt marsh. Vineyards have been planted with success. The soil, impregnated as it is with salt, is a powerful counter-agent to the phylloxera, and the vines grow and flourish in near proximity to the sea.

Melancholy the Camargue may be, with its brackish waters and occasional farmhouses, and villages rising like islands from the green level of the plain. But it has its own compelling if somewhat mournful charm. Water, reeds, and cultivated fields meet in one great sheet that stretches for many miles. Human habitations are few and far between. Herds of wild cattle and horned sheep roam about its pasturage. Flocks of flamingoes, so you are told, may sometimes be seen—I make no pretence of having feasted my eyes on any sight so beautiful as a flight of pink wings. Bounded on one side by the distant line of the Cevennes, and on the other by the dim waters of the Mediterranean, the Camargue, desolate by day, becomes apocalyptic in colour as the evening lights strike the plain. Desperate, too, are the winds that sweep across this open area, compelling man and beast, and even mechanical traction, to bow to their fury.

Trees are scanty, save in the neighbourhood of the occasional farms, but the ragged tamarisk and the umbrella pine have found a footing on the dunes and thus fix the shifting sands. In the first flush of spring the very desolation, in the words of the poet, becomes a delicate thing, and a mantle of strange beauty falls over the Camargue. The mosquito and his legions have not yet arrived, and there are no dangers to health; but in the summer and autumn the plain is fever-ridden and unhealthy in the extreme. The haggard looks and yellow skins of the occasional in-

habitants tell their own tale. Yet in the past large and flourishing towns existed where the shepherd tends his flocks today and the French peasant fights a stern and long-drawn battle with the marsh and its miasmas.

Arles, Aigues Mortes, St. Gilles, Les Stes. Maries were places famous in their day, but they live on as shadows in the midst of a changed world.

Arles stands at the apex of the Rhone Delta, just below the point where the river divides into two main branches. It would certainly feel insulted at being numbered among the forgotten cities of the Camargue. Is it not a *chef-lieu d'arrondissement*, and does not the P.L.M. main line pass near its walls? Are its women not famed throughout France for the beauty and purity of the Greek type handed down to them? But if Arles survives in some measure today as a small provincial town, it survives in virtue of the past. It is but the ghost of its former glories, even though a more substantial ghost than some of its neighbours. "Arles," writes Monsieur Lentheric, "n'est pas une ville morte, mais c'est une reine déchue."

Arles can be visited in the day from Avignon, but two inns cater for the tourists who arrive in large numbers during the season. It was amusing to lunch in the restaurant with its sanded floor, where commercial Arles had gathered, apparently for its midday meal. When we arrived a large company were struggling, as a Scotch elder struggles in prayer, with a beef course of phenomenal toughness. It derived clearly from a parent animal accustomed during long years of experience to steady exercise on the Camargue. We joined our efforts to those of our neighbours, but the good work proceeded slowly. Glances of sympathy were exchanged between the respective toilers. "C'est donc du pneu Michelin que vous nous servez, garçon," said one boy, with a wink at us. The ordinary English waiter would have been sulky and annoyed. Not so the undefeated factotum of the Arles hotel, who turned a beaming smile on the young man as he collected the plates. "Mais oui, monsieur, c'est du pneu premier ordre," retiring with a flick of his napkin and the honours of the encounter. Luckily artichokes made their appear-

ance, and the baffled attack on the beef was now diverted to an easier form of assault. The local types were interesting to watch. One old countryman and his wife might have been the originals of the grandfather and grandmother in Daudet's "Arlésienne." Not every Arlésienne, by the way, is beautiful, though here and there profiles of real distinction may be seen. In the restaurant a small boy belonging to the household had a face like a Greek cameo, but for some curious reason the beauty of the women is not generally inherited by their sons. The men of Arles are a plain race, and the tradition of good looks is handed down on the distaff side.

It is always a puzzle to me how we managed to take a motor-car into the Place du Forum at Arles during our search for the hotel. Ignorance alone made the adventure possible, but when subsequently we set out on foot to explore the labyrinth of narrow winding streets, that wind and twist round the great ruins, the adventure became the more remarkable. The streets of Arles are not only incredibly narrow, but they ramble from nowhere to nowhere with a fine lack of anything coherent in plan or direction. Magnificence and stateliness belong to the past. The present town clings in humble, even deprecating guise, round the shattered monuments of Roman glory.

Roman Arles must have been a very different place from the city of today. The name is thought by some to be derived from two Celtic words: *ar lath*, wet place. In classical times the limestone outcrop on which the town stands was to a great extent surrounded by water. What is now cultivated plain was then lagoon and harbour. The city and its splendid buildings rose out of the tranquil surface of an inner sea. The main branch of the Rhone flowed under its walls, and was bridged by the Emperor Constantine. But the river itself, unconfined by the dykes and canalisation of later generations, flowed at will when in flood across what is now dry ground.

At Arles, as at Nîmes and Orange, there are Roman remains of the first importance. The great arena, with its Doric base and Corinthian upper storey, is one of the largest in France and seated 26,000 spectators. Amphitheatres

suggest some interesting speculations as to the possible relation of their size to the population of the places where they were built. Games and amusements played a part in Roman life far greater than anything known to us now. Larger crowds proportionately flocked to the gladiatorial shows than flock to the cricket and football matches of today. But even so, the classical amphitheatres, like the mediæval churches, appear to have been built on a scale altogether larger than what the needs of the population required. Someone had to stay at home and mind the baby, however famous a Roman holiday. It is doubtful whether the population of Arles at the height of its glory ever exceeded 80,000 persons, so there could have been no overcrowding in the vast amphitheatre.

Arles was originally a Græco-Celtic settlement. It was colonised by Julius Cæsar in 46 B.C., the veterans of the Sixth Legion being sent to occupy the district. The city of the marshes grew rapidly into a centre of great importance. A complete Roman hierarchy was soon established, and buildings were erected that won for Arles the name of the Gallic Rome. Amphitheatre, theatre, forum, capitol, temples transformed the limestone outcrop. A long line of aqueducts brought pure water from the hills across the lagoons. Constantine was fond of Arles and frequently resided here. It is said that in the moment of transferring the seat of government from Rome he hesitated between the claims of Arles and Constantinople. Different indeed would have been the course of history had Gaul become the new headquarters of the empire. But it is difficult to believe that there could ever have been any real choice between the lagoons of Arles and the superb site offered by Byzantium.

On the break-up of the empire Arles suffered severely. She had been, so to speak, too much in the limelight, and was too rich a prey to escape the notice of invaders and Barbarians hungry for plunder. The Saracens came and went in Provence for 200 years and captured Arles among other cities. The history of Southern France is one of curious if tacit understanding between the Christian inhabitants and the southern invaders. Consequently Arles

felt the Mohammedan yoke less heavily than the brutalities of the Norman pirates who ravaged her coasts. The Saracens converted the town into a fortress. The four towers added to the Roman arena for purposes of defence, though a later addition, do not seem out of place. In the Middle Ages the arena itself became a place of refuge for the population and was crowded with houses and buildings —a town within a town. It remained in this state until the middle of the nineteenth century, when the arena was cleared and restored. Bull-fights now replace the old Roman shows, but bull-fights of a tempered kind, divested of brutality. The bull is decorated with a red cockade between the horns, and the toreador has to show his skill by carrying off this trophy. Blood is not spilt, and accidents are rare.

Another Roman memorial of great interest at Arles is the ancient burial-place known as the Alyscamps. Burial on the dry limestone outcrop of Arles was a desirable thing to both the Pagan and Christian inhabitants of a town surrounded by water. The Alyscamps was a vast necropolis in Roman times, and it was no less fashionable as a burial-place during the Middle Ages. Hundreds of sarcophagi, both Pagan and Christian, have been broken up and destroyed during the long centuries of careless irreverence. The whole neighbourhood is strewn with their fragments, and the tombs gathered together in the Alyscamps today represent a mere fraction of the dead interred originally in this vast necropolis. Some of the finest sarcophagi are preserved in the Arles Museum, and some can be seen in the Louvre.

As the Church strengthened its hold, the Alyscamps became a Christian burial-place. Legend relates that St. Trophime, whose sense of fitness was shocked at the thought of Pagans and Christians being buried together, objected strongly to the consecration of the Alyscamps for this purpose, and expressed his view with so much tartness that a synod of bishops, by whom the suggestion had been made, recanted their opinions with commendable haste. But the bishops in the long run had the best of the argument. Jesus Christ Himself appeared in a thunderstorm, and a

Divine Hand was seen to be held out in blessing over the cemetery. Clearly there was nothing more to be said by St. Trophime, whose discomfiture must have been complete. The humours of a past generation evaporate easily among concrete records, but certain legends of the Early Church point, so it seems to me, not so much to naïve faith as to a very real reaction, skilfully disguised though it may have been, against the dogmatic piety of superior persons—just as tiresome and trying then as now.

Under Barbarossa, Arles became a free city, but its great hour had passed. Little by little the Roman monuments fell into decay. The men of the Middle Ages, as we have seen repeatedly in other places, had neither soul nor conscience in the matter of tearing down old buildings. The fine theatre built during the reign of Augustus was pillaged first by the Church and then by the secular builders. For centuries it served as a quarry. Constantine's palace has disappeared completely, and one battered remnant, the Tour des Trouilles, alone remains to bear witness to the passage of the Cæsars. But as Pagan art fell into decay, a new birth of sentiment and ideas was called into existence by the Christian Church. Romanesque architecture developed here in congenial soil. The church of St. Trophime is not only the pride of Provence, but a superb relic of mediæval genius. St. Trophime, like Lazarus and the three Marys, of whom such charming tales are told, is a saint unknown to history. But he is a legendary figure of great importance in Provence, where he was claimed as a disciple of St. Paul's and the first Christian missionary to preach the Gospel in Arles. Lucky indeed is the saint whose memory survives in such a building as the church of St. Trophime at Arles.

CHAPTER XXIX

ST. TROPHIME OF ARLES

The Romanesque churches of Provence cover what is relatively a small area bounded by Romans on the north, St. Gilles on the west, and the Alps on the east. Architecturally the School of Provence did not spread far afield, though it includes two of the most famous churches in France, and we are sensible at many points of the influence of its great neighbours Burgundy and Languedoc. Clearly, too, there was an exchange of artistic ideas with the Lombards. Geography and architecture cut across each other here in rather a puzzling way, for, as we saw in Chapter XI., Languedoc gives its name to what are in fact two very distinct countries divided by the Cevennes. St. Trophime at Arles and its celebrated neighbour St. Gilles are geographically in or on the borders of Languedoc, but architecturally they belong to the School of Provence, and only felt here and there the influences that radiated from Toulouse.

The controversies that rage over Romanesque architecture are especially marked in Provence. Facts are few and far between, and archæologists are left to draw their own deductions from the churches—deductions that are full of pitfalls. It was the fashion at one moment to regard the School of Provence as one of the earliest in the field of Romanesque, and to claim that its influence had radiated far to the north and had actually inspired the west portal of Chartres. This view was put forward by the German archæologist Vöge and was shared by Revoil. Superficially there was much to be said for it. More classical monuments had survived in Provence than in any part of France, and in no other district is classical influence so strong and so obvious. Columns, statues, friezes, hunting scenes,

scrolls, all bore the somewhat massive stamp of Roman art. Was it not natural to conclude that the chain of sculpture had never been broken and that Arles was the cradle of Christian statuary ?

Mr. Kingsley Porter still believes in the precocity of Romanesque architecture in Provence,* but the overwhelming majority of archæologists hold that so far from being a forerunner in the revival of architecture, this school was the product not of Gallo-Roman tradition but of a renaissance, and comes at the end and not at the beginning of the Romanesque period. No authentic building survives in Provence that can be dated between the classical period and the eleventh century, and Revoil attributed to Carolingian times churches altogether later in date. Provence is a cockpit of rival theories, for Monsieur Marignan goes to the other extreme, and places the whole of the work at Arles and St. Gilles in the thirteenth century. For most people the questions raised by these two great churches are best approached by Monsieur de Lasteyrie in his masterly study " Études sur la Sculpture Française au Moyen Âge."† In this monograph the whole problem is subjected to exhaustive analysis and examination. The extreme views of both Revoil and Marignan are rejected, and reasons given for much of the sculpture being dated in the last quarter of the twelfth century. In all that I shall have to say about these churches, I shall follow closely in Monsieur de Lasteyrie's steps.

The typical Provençal church is a very austere building, plainly designed and plainly built. It consists of a nave, covered by a barrel vault—very lofty in proportion to its breadth. Side aisles are small and often lacking altogether. The half-barrel vaults of the side aisles do not, as in Auvergne, prop the vault of the nave. The barrel vault of the nave is supported by reinforcing arches, and these rest on pilasters carried up the face of the piers. The bays of the nave are few and large. A lantern tower on squinches is raised over the transept crossing. In Provence this lan-

* Kingsley Porter, "Romanesque Sculpture of the Pilgrimage Roads."

† Fondation Eugène Piot, vol. viii.

[*Archives Photographiques, Paris.*

ARLES : CLOISTER OF ST. TROPHIME.

tern usually springs from a lower level than that of the nave vault. This is one of the most striking features of Provençal Romanesque, though not one of the happiest, as it tends to darken the church. Radiating chapels are absent here, and the east end generally consists of an apse with possibly two apsidioles.

Pointed arches are very common in Provence. Long before the days of Gothic, experience had proved in Provence as elsewhere that the thrust of the vault was better dealt with by a pointed than by a round arch. Windows were inserted rather timidly, between the top of the arcades in the nave and the spring of the vault. The churches are very dark, but in a land of sunshine windows were of secondary importance. The piers of the nave are devoid of historiated capitals—decoration in the interior of a Provençal church is reduced to a severe minimum. On the other hand, no wealth and no elaboration was too great for the splendid portals of the west end, and Provence has to this day a series of fine cloisters, of which St. Trophime at Arles is the most celebrated. Dark interiors did not lend themselves to historiated capitals, and the Provençal sculptors, as it seems to us with great good sense, concentrated their efforts on cloisters and those portions of the building where there was ample light.

The severe interior of the Provençal church, dimly lighted by its sparse windows, throws up into sharp relief the gay decoration of façade. The old Pagan spirit seems to speak again in the classical mouldings and ornament that appear on pediment and architrave. At Notre Dame des Doms at Avignon it is difficult to believe that the entrance porch, with its Corinthian columns and beautiful cornice, is not a classical fragment. At Carpentras there is a frieze with little winged figures—not too skilfully carved—but still little Pagan gods holding up wreaths of flowers and foliage. At St. Restitut and St. Gabriel, Corinthian columns and classical mouldings appear on the façade in the same style as at Notre Dame des Doms. Ste. Marthe at Tarascon has a side portal with beading on the archivolt. Slender columns crowned by Corinthian capitals decorate the door jambs and support the frieze. A band of

classical pilasters resting on a rich cornice with corbel heads appears on the upper part of the façade. At Vaison, at St. Paul-Trois-Châteaux, and at Aix in Provence interesting examples of Romanesque work may be seen. But all pale before St. Trophime at Arles and St. Gilles, which so far transcend the other churches of Provence that the whole interest of the school is centred in them.

The controversy concerned with the date of St. Gilles and St. Trophime, and the relationships between the two churches, involves a detailed and highly technical argument out of place in this book. Definite information, I must repeat again, is almost wholly lacking, and archæologists have to rely on internal evidence for their main conclusions. The argument of Monsieur de Lasteyrie, now generally accepted, may be summed up as follows: St. Trophime and St. Gilles are not early churches, and their sculptures belong to the end and not to the beginning of the twelfth century. Gallo-Roman and classical influence is very strong throughout, but there was also Lombard influence, and some influences from the School of Languedoc. There is reason to think that Provençal sculptors worked subsequently at Modena, where similarities of style exist between capitals and bas reliefs in the cathedral and those found in the Rhone Valley. To these I shall return at the end of the next chapter.

The interior of St. Trophime does not call for any detailed description. It is a typical Provence church: plain, austere, with a lofty aisle covered by a barrel vault. But the noble cloister is one of the treasures of France. On a hot day, when the brilliant sun of Provence beats down on Arles, this green garden with its flowers and fountain, arcades and sculptures, is a scene of enchantment that has few equals in France or Europe. The cloister is not all of the same date. The north and east galleries belong to the end of the twelfth century, the west gallery to the thirteenth, and the south to the fourteenth centuries. The Gothic portion is good of its kind, but is not comparable in quality with the earlier work.

Delicate twin columns with historiated capitals support the arcades of the cloister, and at the angles massive piers

with figures of saints and Apostles take the thrust of the vault. At the north-west angle we have St. John, St. Trophime, and St. Peter. The figures, with hands raised in blessing, look stiff, almost hieratical, but though calm they are full of deep feeling. Scenes of the Resurrection appear on bas reliefs inserted between the figures. In one the Holy Women are shown at the Tomb, and in the other they are seen buying spices—a decorative theme popularised, as we have seen elsewhere, by the Miracle Plays.* St. Trophime wears no mitre, and this points to the artist working from an archaic model. St. Peter, a real Gallo-Roman type, is not barefooted, but wears sandals, an old tradition lost towards the end of the twelfth century, when saints and Apostles were usually represented with bare feet. The soldiers at the Tomb are not dressed like men-at-arms during the reigns of Philip Augustus and St. Louis, but are clearly copied from a classical model.

Three figures appear on another pillar, whose identity is uncertain. They may represent Christ and the disciples at Emmaus or St. James with two pilgrims. On another pillar Christ shows his wounds to St. Thomas and St. James appears with a scroll. The pillar of the north-east angle has a statue of St. Paul, St. Stephen, and possibly St. Matthew. Here again we have bas reliefs inserted, one of the Ascension and one of the lapidation of St. Stephen. These figures on the columns are framed in foliage scrolls, and the whole impression of the cloister is very fine. The statues are curiously archaic for late twelfth-century sculpture, but the stiffness is, I think, not a drawback. Rich though the work at St. Trophime, it is marked throughout by a massive touch that degenerates easily into coarseness. The historiated capitals cover the usual range of Old and New Testament subjects thrown together apparently without much plan. I have dealt elsewhere with the beauties of Moissac, but the cloister at Arles, owing to the splendid figure groups at the angles, is the more imposing ensemble of the two. The shallow bas reliefs on the Moissac pillars are entirely eclipsed at Arles. Monsieur de Lasteyrie places the date of this cloister about the year 1180. The

* Page 337.

work at Arles is certainly later than that at St. Gilles, and internal evidence points to a building of the twelfth century. The bones of St. Trophime were translated from the Alyscamps to the church in 1152 by Archbishop Raymond de Montrand. This is the only fact known to us about the cathedral in the twelfth century, and it throws little or no light on any building programme.

Let us leave the cloister with its cool galleries and green foliage and stand in the sunshine before the porch. Here, as at St. Gilles, we have quite a different type of portal from anything in Burgundy or Languedoc or Poitou. Frieze and statues and Corinthian columns show that, though the classical tradition may have slumbered in Provence, the instinct for classical ornament survived in the race and reappeared to meet the needs of Christian architecture. A triangular moulding, with large corbel heads, frames the whole group of sculpture composing the porch. Over the single doorway, which is set back and deeply recessed, is a tympanum representing Christ in Glory, sitting between the emblems of the Evangelists. Figurines of angels decorate the inner face of the recess, and slender but plain archivolts fall, not on the capitals of columns, but on the abacus of the frieze. The Christ in Glory is planned on the same lines as the tympanum of the west door at Chartres, and though inferior in quality and execution, may have been inspired by the same design. A wonderful frieze covers the cornice, which runs the whole breadth of the portal. The Twelve Apostles appear on the lintel immediately below the tympanum. To the left a procession of the Blessed is welcomed by an angel, who deposits their souls in the breasts of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. These bulky though impressive figures nurse the baby after the fashion set at Moissac. To the right an angel with a drawn sword repulses the damned, whose necks are linked together by a cord, while their feet are licked by highly stylised flames. The frieze is supported by a series of columns with Corinthian capitals, and under the colonnade thus formed great figures of saints and Apostles stand in niched recesses—five on each side of the doorway. To the left are St. Peter and St. John; to the right St.

[*Archives Photographiques, Paris.*

ARLES : ST. TROPHIME (APOSTLES OF PORTAL).

Trophime, St. James the Minor, St. Bartholomew, St. Paul, St. Andrew, St. James the Greater, and St. Philip. The place between St. Andrew and St. James is filled with a bas relief of the lapidation of St. Stephen. The soul of the martyr is seen rising to heaven in the form of a child, with hands upheld by two attractive angels. But why in a very symmetrical composition a bas relief should appear at this point instead of a statue is a puzzle to which we have no clue.

The designer of the portal has exhausted himself in piling wealth on wealth in the matter of decoration. Some critics find the portal rather heavy and overdone, but the general effect is very remarkable. Old classical mouldings, like the Greek key pattern, reappear in an adapted form, though the Corinthian columns do not repeat the rather monotonous regularity of the classical model. The designs are varied, and historiated bases with lions, fantastic beasts, and other scenes further heighten the impression of rich individuality. Each recess in which a saint stands is framed by a band of scroll work, and a second frieze running below the level of the first on the wall of the colonnade adds a final touch of magnificence to this wonderful ensemble.

It is unlikely that the portal of St. Trophime can be earlier than 1150; probably it should be dated between 1150 and 1190. It is easy to understand the persistence of classical ornament in such a place, for the mediæval builders in Provence had under their eyes the remains of great Roman memorials at Arles, Nîmes, and Orange. Arles, as we saw in the last chapter, was a meeting-place of the Pagan and Christian worlds: both cultures have left their stamp on its monuments. But there is another and more puzzling element to be considered here.

The contrast between the bare severity of the interior and the magnificent exterior of a Provençal church like St. Trophime is, I think, very suggestive, for it emphasises in striking fashion those dual elements in the southern temperament that baffle and perplex us in mediæval times and persist in a measure to this day. On the one hand

we have a race pleasure-loving, intelligent, and luxurious, with an outlook on life Pagan at core; on the other a people serious and austere, who went to the stake by the thousand for the grim tenets of the Albigenses, and in a later age made Southern France the stronghold of Protestantism. In no part of Europe was the Catholic faith more bitterly attacked than in Provence and Languedoc during the twelfth century. Pierre de Bruys, who was burnt at St. Gilles in 1143, rejected the efficacy of sacraments and the authority of the Church as vigorously as the Parfaits and the Croyants. Henry of Lausanne, an ex-Cluny monk, succeeded him, and his heretical teaching swept like wildfire through the south. The beautiful Romanesque churches we admire today were built in an age of strife and schism, when Catholicism had to meet a vigorous challenge. Sculpture and decoration had more than artistic values. They sounded the note of a counter-challenge. Christ on the Cross appears for the first time on the portal of St. Gilles —St. Gilles, where Pierre de Bruys had burnt the crucifix. Monsieur Mâle remarks with great truth that in the south churches were fortresses of the faith in the middle of a hostile world.* The monsters carved on the historiated bases of the columns at St. Trophime and St. Gilles are thought by some observers to symbolise heresies trodden under foot by Apostles and saints. The great cathedrals of the north were monuments of popular goodwill, built relatively speaking in an atmosphere of peace and concord; not so the twelfth-century abbeys of Southern France, round whose portals the obstinate questionings of minds more sceptical than pious surged in violence and bloodshed.

* Mâle, " L'Art Religieux du 12ème Siècle," p. 422.

CHAPTER XXX

ST. GILLES

THERE is a delightful story told about St. Gilles. Charlemagne, Charles the Great, Charles King of the Franks and Emperor of the West had a heavy, an unconfessed, and an unabsolved sin on his conscience. The emperor was anxious to make his soul and to receive the Holy Communion, but the awkward necessity for confession barred the way. Charlemagne could not bring himself to confess this particular sin to any priest—it was not seemly for a great emperor to humble himself to that extent. But the Church was obdurate, being punctilious, then as now, on all points leading up to Canossa. No absolution without confession, and no reservations for emperors any more than for humble men. The deadlock therefore seemed complete, for the emperor persisted in his attitude. Ecclesiastical skill was, however, equal to the occasion. Someone suggested that St. Gilles, a saint of extraordinary merit and an object of universal veneration, should be called in to settle the difficulty. It was accordingly agreed that Charlemagne should write down his sin on a piece of parchment, and that this parchment should be placed, with due solemnity, on a shrine consecrated to St. Gilles. The saint in Paradise would doubtless give a clear ruling as to the course to be followed. This pious hope was more than fulfilled. When the parchment was placed on the altar, an angelic hand was seen to descend with a lighted torch and set fire to the paper. A thin column of smoke rose from the altar as Charlemagne's parchment was consumed, and with it his sin. All was well after such a miracle. The Almighty had made a graceful compromise with the emperor, seemly as between gentlemen wielding heavenly and earthly authority and each able to appreciate the difficulties of the other's position.

Now whether the real St. Gilles, whose legendary aspect is one of great austerity, would have proved so accommodating seems doubtful. But the story shows the authority attached to his name in Carolingian times. A great legend is often the precursor of a great church. So it was with our saint. St. Gilles's reputation for dealing with unconfessed sins gave him a special position in the heavenly hierarchy, and it was this reputation—necessarily one of immense importance to a certain type of penitent—that for many centuries brought fame and fortune to the abbey founded in his honour. At Chartres, where so vast a volume of legend has been graved in stone, the story of Charlemagne's sin and St. Gilles's method of dealing with it finds its place among the beautiful sculptures of the south portal.

The town or village of St. Gilles, whether or not its inhabitants cling to the more dignified title, is a desolate place today. No forgotten city of the Camargue lives on in more forlorn guise. It stands on a little hill in the centre of a richly cultivated plain. The Petit Rhone flows near the town, but the lagoon, which formerly surrounded it on all sides, has long since dried up, and with it the prosperity of former days. Ships anchor no more beneath its walls; quays once thronged with merchandise have vanished. It is difficult to realise that this dreary place, many miles from the sea, was once a harbour of considerable importance. Prior to the Roman occupation a Greek city stood on the site, and before Aigues Mortes came into existence St Gilles, during the Middle Ages, was a centre where pilgrims gathered prior to embarking for the Holy Land. It was the chief Priory of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem in France, and popes and kings were frequent visitors during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Not only was St. Gilles a port, but a great fair took place annually that attracted custom from all parts of Languedoc and Provence. Four Councils of the Church were held here, and the counts of Toulouse, powerful overlords of a vast district, were proud to number among their titles that of Count of St. Gilles. Amid the dirt and decay of today it would be difficult to conjure up any

memories of this busy and prosperous past but for the portal of the abbey church and the splendid sculptures that count among the triumphs of mediæval art.

The town of St. Gilles grew up round the abbey, built according to tradition over the grave of the saint. The memory of St. Gilles was specially venerated in Southern France. Legend relates that he landed on the coasts of Gaul early in the seventh century. His steps first led him to Arles, but Arles proved too gay and worldly a place for a saint so austere. Desiring greater isolation, he retired to a grotto situated near Arles, in the royal forest—the Sylva Gothica. The Visigoths—so much the best of the Barbarian invaders—were in possession at the time, and Wamba, a courtly and heroic figure, was their king. It chanced one day when the king was hunting in the Sylva Gothica that a group of his followers, detached from their companions, found themselves in pursuit of a white doe, which they chased for many miles. The doe finally disappeared into a grotto on the hillside. The Goths followed their quarry to earth, but were struck with awe and amazement at the sight they found. The grotto was inhabited by a venerable man with long white hair, who held the doe in his arms, her head against his heart. The king's retainers withdrew in haste and returned to Wamba with their story. Wamba, deeply impressed by the miraculous tale, visited St. Gilles in his grotto at the head of a splendid cortège. He implored the saint not to abandon his refuge, and to ensure him the necessary peace and seclusion for a life of meditation, gave him the whole forest as a gift. Here St. Gilles founded a monastery, and here in due time he died and was buried. Pilgrims flocked to his tomb from all parts of France, and in course of time it was proposed to replace the primitive church by a building whose splendour should be adequate to the reputation of the saint.

The church thus founded still draws an occasional pilgrim to St. Gilles, who comes to marvel at the miracle of stone it contains, but the squalid little place, with its tangle of mean streets, is a poor setting for so great a jewel. The hollow-eyed inhabitants stare at you apathetic-

ally, and seem to ask the same mute question—Why come to St. Gilles if you can possibly stay away ?

The decadence of St. Gilles dates from the sixteenth century, but throughout the ages the unhappy town caught the full blast of whatever violence, religious or revolutionary, was abroad. St. Gilles was actively concerned in all the troubles of the Albigensian War; indeed, that disastrous fire was lit by a spark struck here. Peter of Castelnau, a papal legate, was murdered at St. Gilles at the instigation, so his supporters declared, of Raymond, Count of Toulouse. For this offence the count was forced to do penance in 1209 before the church of St. Gilles. As we know, the humiliation of Raymond did not pacify the Church or extirpate the heresy. I have told the story of the Albigensian War in another chapter, and it is unnecessary here to dwell again on that unhappy page of history and the ruin it brought on the whole of Languedoc. But the wars of religion in the sixteenth century proved even more fatal to St. Gilles than the earlier disturbances. There was nothing to choose in bigotry or ferocity between the rival camps. It is a great mistake to think that Protestantism *per se* was more tolerant or more liberal-minded than Catholicism. Its records are less black because its opportunities of persecution have been smaller. Indeed, from the standpoint of archæology, it is more difficult to be patient with the Huguenots, for their activities took the form of working havoc among the stones and glass of the Middle Ages. The Catholics burnt and tortured men's bodies, which, in any event, were doomed to perish. But the Huguenots unfortunately worked off their spleen by decapitating saints and mutilating monuments that would have survived from generation to generation as things of joy and beauty. At St. Gilles they had the upper hand and were not backward in making it felt. They sacked the town from end to end, used the church as a citadel, and, when alarmed by the approach of a royal army, did their best to destroy the church. This genial aim failed owing to the shortness of time, but consolation was sought and found in a general massacre of priests and choristers, whom they flung down a well. Any measure of the cup

left empty by the zealots of 1562 was filled by the revolutionaries of 1790, and once again a storm of blood and violence broke over the unhappy town.

That the church is maimed and ruined after such a history is not surprising. The marvel is that anything has survived such torrents of senseless fury. St. Gilles, like many other churches, would have disappeared finally during the Revolution but for the courage and enterprise of a local lawyer, Monsieur Michel, who protested against the destruction of a famous monument. His intervention saved the church, though a renegade curé clamoured for the destruction of the sculptures as recalling "to the friends of liberty and equality the odious remembrances of the feudal régime." The figures of the façade were again mutilated at this time and some of the columns upset. St. Gilles has a beautiful early crypt, but the church which had been left in ruins by the Huguenots was restored in the seventeenth century. This effort was not very successful, for the arcades of the nave were clumsily rebuilt and given their present ungracious form. The twelfth-century crypt, with side aisles and very early ogival vaulting, is a fine piece of work. But the main interest of St. Gilles is concentrated in its façade and triple portal—a façade still finer and more elaborate than what we have seen at Arles.

St. Gilles, like St. Trophime, has been a battlefield for archæologists as well as for Albigenses and Huguenots. The date of its construction has been advanced or retarded according to the theory put forward. As at Arles, the rival theories are complicated and technical, but I propose again to accept the main conclusions of Monsieur de Lasteyrie in the work already mentioned on p. 362.*

The original plan of the church was never carried out. It was designed on a vast scale in 1116, when the crypt was begun, but work was checked owing to constant violence and disorder. In 1119 Alphonse Jourdain, who had a quarrel with the town of St. Gilles, pillaged the treasury and, in spite of papal anathemas launched against him by

* "Notes sur la Sculpture Romane," Fondation Eugène Piot, vol. viii.

Calixtus II., carried off the Abbot Hugh to his castle at Beaucaire. Subsequently Cluny intervened, and Peter the Venerable—afterwards Abbot of Cluny—was sent by the pope to restore order. Work was resumed, and about 1140, when the crypt was nearing completion, the original plan was modified by the introduction of ogival vaulting. It may seem very surprising that rib vaulting should make its appearance at so early a date, but experts claim to have found traces of Burgundian work in the treatment of the pillars, and it is possible that Peter the Venerable brought Burgundian artists with him from Cluny. The years between 1140 and 1170 seem to have been a period of relative peace for St. Gilles, but it is very difficult to determine when the nave was finished or the dates of the façade and the choir. Building almost invariably began with the choir, but at St. Gilles it was desired to preserve the old sanctuary of the church consecrated by Urban II. in 1096, and this fact may have upset the normal procedure. About 1179 the abbey was involved in serious financial difficulties, and subsequently fresh troubles arose, first with the Count of Toulouse and then with the Albigenses. The thirteenth century was well advanced before conditions were sufficiently settled to permit of building operations being resumed.

Monsieur Marignan takes the view that the whole façade is the work of the thirteenth century, but Monsieur de Lasteyrie will have none of this. One historical fact is of great importance in this tangled enquiry. We are told expressly that in 1209 Raymond, Count of Toulouse, was brought before the doors of St. Gilles—*ante fores ecclesiæ*—to expiate his sin in protecting heretics and for the murder of Peter of Castelnau. Clearly doors must have been in existence before which he was brought, and since it is incredible that building could have gone on during the height of the Albigensian struggle, this negative evidence points to the construction of the porch during the period of peace between 1150 and 1179. As for the thirteenth-century theory advanced by Monsieur Marignan, Romanesque architecture persisted in the south long after Gothic had risen to power in the north; but it is difficult to think that a

[*Photo. Lévy et Neurdein Réunies.*

ST. GILLES : PORTAL.

magnificent façade constructed at this late date should show no trace of Gothic influence then at the height of its power.

The portal of St. Gilles is not a homogeneous work. Its execution was spread over many years and was often interrupted. Monsieur de Lasteyrie thinks that the general plan and principal architectural details were laid down about 1140. It is very surprising, in view of the many troubles of the monastery and the interminable delays due to civil strife, that the main outline was adhered to over the course of half a century. Thanks to such admirable persistence in the teeth of overwhelming difficulties, this great ensemble—the finest legacy of Romanesque sculpture in Southern France—has come down to us still marked by unity of plan, whatever variations may be noted in the details.

The façade of St. Gilles consists of three portals united by a cornice covered from end to end by a long frieze. The church—save for the crypt we need waste no time over the interior—is set off to great advantage by a long flight of steps running the whole width of the building. As you emerge from the squalid streets of the little town into a neglected *place*, with houses huddled about it in irregular fashion, the magnificence of the portal bursts on you with a shock of surprise. The general plan of the central porch is almost identical with that of St. Trophime. The principal features of St. Gilles were reproduced with great fidelity at Arles. Each door is deeply recessed with a tympanum framed by a series of slender archivolts. As at Arles, columns with Corinthian capitals support the cornice; niches under the colonnade divided by pilasters and bands of scroll work hold statues of Apostles; a second frieze runs on the wall of the colonnade above the heads of the statues. At Arles this frieze has figure subjects; at St. Gilles it consists of scrolls. At both churches some columns of the portal rest on couchant lions—a form of decoration clearly imported from Lombardy, but the side portals are lacking at Arles, and it is their presence that adds immeasurably to the dignity of St. Gilles. The portico of St. Trophime looks as though it had been plastered

on to the façade for decorative purposes. At St. Gilles the sculptures form part of a better architectural whole. The Corinthian columns are specially interesting, for more than once the mediæval builders have cut down and adapted genuine classical columns from some ancient building belonging to the Gallo-Roman period.

The sculptures on the façade at St. Gilles can be divided into three groups, all of different dates. First are the twelve statues of the Apostles, grouped round the main portal, and two figures of angels overthrowing demons at the extreme ends of the façade. These statues are not all of the same merit and not all by the same hand. But they are all nearly enough related for it to be said that they proceed from the same *atelier* and were executed at the same epoch. Beginning on the extreme left, the first figure to the right of the north door is St. Matthew holding a book, then St. Bartholomew with a scroll, then St. Thomas, whose legs are crossed, and then St. James Minor in a bishop's dress. The four following figures decorate the uprights of the main door: St. John Evangelist holding a book, St. Peter with the keys, St. James with a book, St Paul holding a phylactery. The four remaining statues come between the main portal and the south door and are inferior in execution. There is nothing to indicate who they are, though the names of St. Simon, St. Philip, and St. Matthew have been hazarded for three of them. The Apostles of St. Gilles are of much finer quality than those of St. Trophime. At Arles the Gallo-Roman tradition betrays itself by a certain heaviness in style and execution. The same Gallo-Roman tradition is manifest at St. Gilles, but some breath from Toulouse has blown here, and the figures in consequence are lighter and more elegant. The crossed legs are very suggestive of the Apostles at St. Étienne. A man of genius, Brunus worked on this façade and has left us his name signed on the statues of St. Matthew and St. Bartholomew. It is looked upon as almost certain that the four statues on the uprights of the main door are either his work or carried out under his immediate supervision.

The frieze above the statues of the Apostles, and continued

on the lintel of the centre door, forms a second group of sculptures of later date and later execution. It unfolds a continuous story, illustrating the closing scenes of the Saviour's life. Beginning on the left, we have successively Judas receiving and bringing back the thirty pieces of silver, Jesus turning the money changers out of the temple, Martha and Mary prostrate at His feet, the resurrection of Lazarus, and the denial of St. Peter. Over the central door we have the two scenes of the Washing of the Feet and the Last Supper. Then to the right follow the Kiss of Judas, Christ before Pilate, the Flagellation, and the Carrying of the Cross.

The general plan and disposition of this frieze recall the frieze on the west portal at Chartres. At St. Gilles the sculptures may be divided into two distinct groups. Those on the left are mediocre in execution, but the bas reliefs to the right are much superior. The Gallo-Roman influence is less felt: the characters are full of movement and life and the draperies finely executed. The whole frieze, unfortunately, is horribly mutilated, but the inherent quality of the work can still be distinguished. This right-hand portion of the frieze is clearly later in date than the left-hand sculptures. It cannot be earlier than the end of the twelfth century—it may even be the work of the early thirteenth.

The tympana of the doors form the third group of sculptures. Of these the tympanum of the central door unhappily was destroyed, and is filled today by a modern work. But the two side doors have a great unity of aspect —archivolts, tympanum, lintel, and jambs are all perfectly harmonised. The left-hand tympanum represents the Adoration of the Magi, and the lintel the Entry of Christ into Jerusalem. Christ on the Cross, surrounded by the Virgin, St. John, the Church and the Synagogues, fills the right-hand tympanum. On the lintel we see the Holy Women first buying perfumes, and then at the Tomb. The work on these tympana is very fine and beautiful in quality—too fine and too beautiful, Monsieur Marignan holds, for the twelfth century. Monsieur de Lasteyrie is, however, satisfied that they must be counted as

Romanesque sculptures, though they belong to the end of the period.

It will be judged from the above account that the façade of St. Gilles is a very composite work, though it maintains a surprising unity of plan. It is older than the portal of St. Trophime, which was copied from it, though St. Trophime at first sight looks more archaic because heavier in execution. The Gallo-Roman spirit rather weights St. Trophime, but lighter hands have worked at St. Gilles. No small part of the interest of the façade lies in the numerous influences that can be said to meet here. Provençal sculpture is grounded in classical tradition, but a classical tradition profoundly modified. The Apostles at St. Gilles were certainly influenced by Gallo-Roman sarcophagi, but such Gallo-Roman models would have emerged transformed from the hands of sculptors who had worked at Chartres. There is no direct evidence of the presence of such *imagiers* at St. Gilles, but there are many indirect indications that some influence passed from one *atelier* to another by sculptors who had worked at Chartres and in Île de France. I have already referred to the influence exercised by the School of Toulouse, an influence which makes itself felt in the greater elongation and elegance of the figures. Burgundy too may have taken a hand in the game. But another interesting source of influence was from Lombardy.

Mediæval sculpture in Italy was much preoccupied with animal decoration. Numerous animal reliefs—slabs, capitals dating from the eighth to the tenth centuries—exist in Lombardy, and can be studied at Milan, Verona, Cividale, and elsewhere. At the end of the eleventh century we find *entrelacs* and scrolls mixed with devouring beasts at Pavia, and the same animals, more tamed and presentable, appear at Modena. Lions as bases for columns are a familiar feature on the portals of many Italian churches, and the lions at St. Gilles and Arles are certainly derived from this source. In the second half of the twelfth century a real personality of the Lombard School emerges in Benedetto Antelami, who was working in 1170 on the cathedral at Parma and on the baptistery at the same place in 1196.

For the baptistery at Parma, and subsequently for Borgo San Donnino near Modena, Benedetto Antelami produced portals with friezes and statues of saints and Apostles bearing a strong family likeness to the portals at Arles and St. Gilles. Benedetto Antelami must have been in France and in touch with French Romanesque sculptors. Men who are keen and alive are only too glad to meet and to benefit each by the other's experience. Lombard masons were in the habit of moving about Europe, and Lombard influence is sensible in many churches throughout South-East France. The Alps presented, as we saw elsewhere, no insurmountable obstacle to the circulation of ideas. Northern Italy and Provence gave one to another, and the sum total of both schools was the richer for the exchange. Antelami and his men may have worked, therefore, at Arles and St. Gilles: accident could not have produced resemblances so striking as may be traced between the churches of Lombardy and Provence at this particular period.

If St. Gilles is one of the last great expressions of Romanesque art, twelfth-century sculpture makes its exit in very splendid guise. In spite of all that the façade has suffered from the malevolence of man, it remains a most noble and varied ensemble, and though the school to which it belongs is less powerful and original than some of its fellows, the Apostles and frieze of St. Gilles rank among the greatest treasures of France.

CHAPTER XXXI

MONTPELLIER AND LA MAGUELONE

Montpellier is, to my way of thinking, one of the most attractive towns in France. It stands on rising ground in a fertile plain some seven miles from the Mediterranean. To the west rise the mountains of the Cevennes—that country of the Camisards where R. L. Stevenson wandered with his donkey to the permanent benefit of literature. Far away to the south the local inhabitants assure you that on a fine day the great mass of the Canigou may be seen guarding the approaches to Catalonia and the Pyrenees. Equally far away to the north stands the last outpost of the Alps, Mont Ventoux. These things I hasten to say I take on trust, for I can make no claim to have seen them. It would in fact interest me much to visit any part of the world at a moment when something abnormal about the weather did not make the season unparalleled in the memory of the oldest inhabitants. I need scarcely say that the necessary abnormality blotted out the further prospect of Alps and Pyrenees during the spring days we spent in Montpellier. But I for one have no quarrel with the nearer view of the sea, plain, and mountain that the city provides from its public garden, known as Le Peyrou. Here you can judge for yourself of the charm of the Languedoc that lies between the Cevennes and the Mediterranean. The Peyrou is a most imposing promenade. Gaul had the tradition of Rome in her blood, and it is only natural that France excelled in buildings of the classical revival. Begun in 1689 in honour of Louis XIV., the gardens and terraces carried on great bastions, the fountains, statues, even an Arc de Triomphe, all testify to the dignified if somewhat frigid spirit of the age of the Grand Monarque. The central feature of the promenade is a water tower surrounded by Corinthian columns, to which

a beautiful eighteenth-century aqueduct brings water across the plain. An instinct for architecture in its major and minor forms is a natural gift that the English have good reason to envy the French. The distinction of the French provincial towns, with their fine public buildings, boulevards, gardens, may well shame the mingled squalor and opulence of centres of commerce and wealth in our own land.

Montpellier, sparkling and prosperous, preserves few signs today of her own antiquity. The ancient cathedral, restored out of all recognition, has no particular interest. The two absurd towers that decorate the west porch are sufficient proof that not every mediæval architect was a genius. The ancient university of Montpellier is celebrated among academic centres. Its school, famous throughout France, dates from the twelfth century. Sharing the common fate of every Languedoc city in the matter of fire and sword during the wars of religion, Montpellier has triumphed lightheartedly over trials of bygone years, before which neighbouring cities have gone under. Her face is turned not to the past but to the future. Since the eighteenth century she has taken to herself a new aspect. Her expression today is wholly modern. The town is gay, prosperous, clean. There is a sense of life and animation about its crowded streets by no means common in France. Still more rare are the crowds of children who tumble over each other on the pavements. These merry black-eyed vagabonds entangle themselves in your skirts and disentangle themselves with a laugh and a gurgle wholly engaging. Never have I seen so many French children at large as in Montpellier. It was a welcome sight to find a French town for once in a way holding its own with Germany in the matter of an overflowing child population. The bearing of the older inhabitants was equally pleasant and friendly. There is an atmosphere of hustle and brisk business about Montpelier, but there is time for the courteous greeting of the stranger within the gate. An opera house, where we heard excellent music, again led to certain reflections not favourable to English enterprise in matters of art. No less admirable is the picture gallery—one of the

best provincial collections in France. Last, but not least, Montpellier possesses in the Hôtel Metropole an entirely admirable and clean hotel—an hotel where you are welcomed and made to feel at home. Altogether, I repeat, one of the most attractive towns in France, little though its virtues are realised by the tourists who herd like sheep along the fashionable and well-trodden paths of the Riviera east of Marseilles.

Montpellier, as I said above, has triumphed over its past. Not so have other places in its neighbourhood, great and famous in their day. Not such has been the fate of the cradle of Montpellier itself, the forgotten city of La Maguelone, where the ruins of a noble church alone bear forlorn witness to a past of vast antiquity. The prosperous meridional city of today grew in strength and power through the downfall of the parent settlement. But Montpellier is a parvenu historically compared with La Maguelone. A wraith of vanished glories, this remote spot stands in the first rank of French antiquities. Maguelone is almost but not quite an island. Hence the term *presqu'île* applied to it. Hidden away on an outcrop of volcanic rock among the lagoons that border the sea, its situation is as rare as it is romantic.

Eleven kilometres from Montpellier on the sea coast lies the shabby little bathing-place of Palavas. I do not understand why the enterprising citizens of Montpellier have not been at more pains to develop the amenities of what in summer time must be a desirable beach. Possibly the stagnant waters of the intervening plain and the mosquitoes they breed may present obstacles, for the strip of low-lying land fringing the Gulf of Lions must be very unhealthy in hot weather. All along the coast runs a line of sand-banks formed, as we saw,* from the detritus carried down by the Rhone and by the Languedoc rivers that descend from the Cevennes. Inland are marshes and stagnant water—long stretches of shimmering flats, beautiful to the eye though possibly suspect to the health expert. Palavas, though shabby, has something about it that recalls the lagoons surrounding Venice. The canals, the boats, the

* See p. 378.

hot sunshine reflected from the water, the line of the Cevennes grey and exquisite in the distance—all this stirred memories of a greater scene. Narcissi, white and yellow, abounded in the fields as we motored towards the coast from Montpellier. The road, carried on a causeway over *étangs* bordering the sea, came to an end within a few yards of the open Mediterranean. Our visit fell on a Sunday afternoon, and the cafés of the little town were thronged with holiday-makers from the neighbouring city. But we wasted no time on the promenade at Palavas. Our concern was with the jewel that lay beyond. Maguelone, fallen from her high estate, withdraws herself proudly from the cheap joys of the *plage*.

We left the town, and turned in through a gate that gave entrance to a sandy track running for two miles or more along a narrow spit of land, with the open sea on one side and the lagoons on the other. The causeway was bordered by ragged tamarisk trees, a symbol of long life—the tree planted by Abraham, so the legend runs, to perpetuate his covenant with Abimelech. The scene was full of strange beauty. We seemed to move in a world of sky and sea and water, rather than of land. The Mediterranean, its indigo waves tipped with foam, broke heavily on the beach, where myriads of shells and pebbles soughed and sighed and wailed as the waters poured over them. The afternoon sunshine caught the foaming edge of the waves and tinged the spray with gold. To the right, through the wind-tossed branches of the trees, the lagoons lay like a sheet of opal in a silence the more striking by contrast with the restless energy of the sea, fretting against the narrow band of intervening sand. It was clear, from the state of the track along which we toiled, that the waves at times washed over the causeway. More than once the sand threatened to smother the wheels of the car and bring us to a standstill. Sand and sea and water, where would this strange road end, and to what goal would it lead us ?

Then at last the wheels gripped firmer ground, as a low mass of rock came into view, and the engine with a snort of satisfaction proclaimed that Richard was himself again. We turned up an incline, and came to a halt by a warm-

coloured farm and outbuildings standing among a group of fine umbrella pines. On our right rose the massive walls of a large and ancient church, scarred by the chances and changes of centuries, but a building of surprising size in such a place. Near at hand was a low dwelling-house standing in the midst of a beautiful if neglected garden, and a farm with its outbuildings. Beyond this nothing. No further sign of house or habitation—the great church alone bearing mute but proud testimony to the days when this deserted isle must have played a very different part in the world from that of its present lot. For Maguelone goes back to the dawn of history. For 1,500 years a Christian church has stood on the island, and long before that date we suspect that Greeks and Phœnicians cast anchor in the lagoons that made the harbour, even in early days, a desirable prize. I am always a little shy of Phœnicians, whose name is often a mere cloak for guess-work, but there is some evidence of a Greek settlement, and with Rome we touch firm ground.

The name Maguelone is differently interpreted. Some see in it a word of Celtic origin, which means the Dweller by the Pool. Others connect it with the old tradition of the Stes. Maries and the journey of Mary Magdalen to Provence—that popular legend of whose reactions far away in Burgundy I have written elsewhere. Monsieur André Joubin, in the *Revue Archéologique*,* thinks that the name is derived from two Greek words—μεγάλη νῆσος, the great isle. There is no evidence as to the exact date that Christianity reached Gaul, but Maguelone was the site of one of the first Christian churches in France. Certainly it had a bishop by the fifth century. After the break-up of the Roman Empire the island was attacked and captured by the Visigoths. They in turn were displaced by the Saracens, who made Maguelone into a fortified stronghold.

In the eighth century calamity swept down in the person of Charles Martel, the redoubtable Hammer of the Lord, who freed Europe from the peril of Moslem domination. The tide of Moslem conquest was stemmed definitely at the

* "Aspects Archéologiques du Languedoc Méditerranéen," 5ème série, tome xii., Novembre-Decembre, 1920.

Battle of Tours, but five years later Charles Martel was engaged in clearing out the Saracenic settlements on the Mediterranean seaboard. From these hornets' nests the pirate followers of the prophet would sally forth to raid and ravage their neighbours. Charles Martel dealt with them faithfully, but incidentally he dealt with Maguelone. The island was caught like a leaf in the tempest of the Hammer's crusade. It was strongly fortified; the port was valuable. Every building accordingly was razed to the ground; not even the ancient Christian church was spared. The bishop took refuge at Villeneuve, on the mainland; the inhabitants fled to the site of the present Montpellier, which came into existence thanks to this catastrophe. For three hundred years Maguelone was deserted. Then in the eleventh century came a new birth of life and prosperity, when Bishop Arnaud built the cathedral of St. Pierre on the ruins of the earlier church.

Once again the shipping and merchandise of the Mediterranean thronged the port and quays of Maguelone. The town, ruled by its bishops, became wealthy and famous. It ranked among the great monastic centres of Southern France. An island with an area of sixty acres, that now contains a farm and a country house, at the height of its prosperity had a population of between 300 and 400 people. Part fortress, part monastery, many buildings both civil and religious were crowded on this rock. Of all this nothing is left today save the fragment of a chapel, now a library, and the frowning mass of the cathedral. The twelfth century was the heroic age of Maguelone. The island was a papal fief, and the popes gave it tangible signs of goodwill. Urban II. visited Maguelone in 1096 and celebrated the Feast of St. Peter with all imaginable pomp. No less than four popes visited the island during the twelfth century. With wealth and prosperity came art and poetry. A canon of Maguelone, Bernard de Treviers, composed about this period one of the famous romances of the Middle Ages—"The Loves of Pierre de Provence and La Belle Maguelone," a touching and naïve story of affection and adversity, ending, however, with the happy reunion of the faithful lovers. This romance won the

admiration of Petrarch, and has been translated into nearly every European language. It was the subject of a pantomime given in Paris at the end of the eighteenth century, and the peasants of Languedoc and Provence still repeat to their children the pretty story of " La Belle Maguelone " and the troubles over which she triumphed.

With wealth and prosperity came also luxury and, in all probability, the abuses of ecclesiastical life. St. Louis felt called upon in the thirteenth century to remonstrate with the Bishop of Maguelone for striking Saracenic coins and trafficking with the Infidel in a manner wholly displeasing to the crowned saint. As time went on Maguelone became less prosperous. Possibly the ever-shifting sandbars of the coast and the consequent changes in the lagoons had rendered the harbour less desirable for shipping. Finally the island was swept into the wars of religion, and its doom was sealed. Catholics and Huguenots fought each other with a special ferocity in Languedoc that recalls the grim struggle of the Albigenses at an earlier date. Once again we are confronted with the eternal riddle of the strength of Protestantism in this southern land and the taste shown by the meridional temperament for the tenets of Calvinism. Predestination and the *farandole* are curious bedfellows. Be that as it may, Montpellier was a Protestant stronghold and played a considerable part in the anarchy of the early seventeenth century. In 1622 the siege of Montpellier was ended by a treaty of peace negotiated between the Duc de Rohan, the chief Huguenot leader of the south, and the royalist army. For the moment an uneasy truce prevailed, but the hour approached when genius, wielding a hand of tempered steel, was to crush the factions of France and refashion the nation into a new and powerful whole. The star of Richelieu had risen:—Richelieu, to whom the Huguenots were objectionable, not on religious grounds but as a faction menacing the unity and authority of the State. Once again Maguelone was to feel the weight of a hammer; of finer make than that of Charles Martel, but no less crushing in its blows. The island had become a place of refuge for the rebellious Protestants of the south. The long finger of the great

Cardinal touched it in 1635, and Maguelone ceased to be. The town, once again, was razed to the ground. Various buildings, necessary to the state of the bishop, had grown up round the church. An ecclesiastical establishment of any fame implied a large household. The bishop, of course, had a palace, and his canons their appropriate housing. Refectory, dispensary, library, hospital, guesthouse, and kitchens were all necessaries of daily life. The bishops did not rely on spiritual force alone for protection from pirates or other enemies. The island was surrounded by high walls and had a garrison of soldiers. In 1611, when an episcopal visitation took place, the report proves that the mediæval appearance of Maguelone was intact at that date. Of this agglomeration of buildings—unique in their setting—Richelieu did not leave one stone standing save the cathedral. The bishopric was removed to Montpellier. Some years later the very stones of the buildings were carried away to construct the canal that runs from Cette to Aigues Mortes.

For more than 200 years desolation in the island reigned supreme. Then, like a ray of light piercing the heavy clouds around the setting sun, a mild after-glow has touched the old age of Maguelone. Fate has dealt kindly with it in our times. The island passed by purchase during the latter half of the nineteenth century into the hands of a Montpellier family named Fabrège. Monsieur Fabrège, a zealous archæologist, proved an admirable keeper of the church and its traditions. Thanks to his enthusiasm, something at least has been saved from the ruin worked by the inexorable hand of time and the still more ruthless hand of man. The old cathedral has been repaired, not restored, with skill and understanding. Once again Mass is said within its walls. Broken though the continuity of worship, Catholic rites had been celebrated in this ancient spot from a date that stretches back to the childhood of the Church—and are celebrated again today.

The cathedral of St. Pierre stands on the highest point of the volcanic rock. The exterior of the church suggests a fortress rather than a place of worship, a feature common to many churches in Provence and Languedoc, and one that

tells its own tale of invasion by sea and by land. The cathedral was a fortified place, and when pirates descended on the island the inhabitants took refuge within it. The flat roof, the immense thickness of the walls, the machicolations, the scanty windows, all betray the needs of warfare. It is a severe-looking building, and, save for the sculptures of the west door, exterior decoration has no place in its design. The interior, designed on lines of extreme simplicity, is sombre and impressive. The church is built in the form of a Latin cross, with a single aisle covered by a barrel vault. Engaged columns with Corinthian capitals carry the pointed arches of the four bays of the nave and the heavy reinforcing arches of the barrel vault. The *chevet* consists of an apse and a narrow transept. There are no radiating chapels and no ambulatory, but each arm of the transept carries a shallow apsidiole. As you enter through the west door, the proportions of the church are largely obscured by a gallery that covers three bays of the nave, and apparently served as occasion demanded either as a singing gallery or as a guardroom in times of trouble. The apse, roofed with a semi-dome, has three small windows and a band of arcatures. Very interesting is the primitive ogival vaulting of the transept, and the proof it gives that here, as at St. Gilles and other places in the south, men's minds were alert and working at an early date in the Middle Ages at the structural difficulties of their time.

A staircase, built in the thickness of the north wall, gives access to the gallery, and led in former days to the cloister and the bishop's palace, now destroyed.

The church, as we see it today, is the product of building and rebuilding at different periods. The ground plan of the apse and part of the foundations of the primitive church destroyed by Charles Martel in 737 came to light during the restoration in 1879. Monsieur Fabrège had the happy thought of tracing the outline of this little building on the floor of the nave, so that it is easy to realise its shape and dimensions. The transepts form part of the church built by Bishop Arnaud in 1054, but the *chevet* was reconstructed in the first half of the twelfth century, and the nave, with its pointed arches, cannot be earlier than the second half of

the same century. A thirteenth-century tower stands to the left of the façade—a real feudal keep in appearance. On the right was another tower, now vanished, called the Eleven Thousand Virgins—a strange echo of St. Ursula in Languedoc. Grim and rugged in its present dismembered state, the cathedral of La Maguelone must have been all fortress and very little church, even in the days of its prosperity.

The sculptures of the west door are interesting, but are not to be numbered among the great examples of Romanesque art. Like the church itself, they have suffered from considerable refashioning. Christ, among symbols of the Evangelists, appears on the tympanum of the doorway. The central figure is gauche and not very interesting; the animals are far from being the inspired beasts of Moissac and elsewhere. At first sight the sculptures look archaic, but they belong to the late twelfth century, and the failures are those of execution, not lack of experience. The tympanum is a curious setting of coloured marbles, and to the right and left on the door jambs are two remarkable statues of Peter and Paul, broad figures with splay faces—apparently fragments of a more primitive tympanum. They look fierce saints as they crouch on each side of the portal, St. Peter holding an imposing bunch of keys, St. Paul flourishing a sword. Great attention has been devoted to the hair. Both Apostles have beards and large moustaches. St. Paul has his hair brushed back in front and parted at both sides, but St. Peter has a wonderful crown of curls framing the face. Still more curious are two corbel heads facing each other on the inner side of the door joints that reproduce the sides of the saints on a larger and more elaborate scale. Clearly the portal, as it exists today, is a patchwork of various materials assembled at a later date. The block of stone that forms the lintel was once a milestone on the Domitian Way—the Roman coast road on the mainland. The twelfth-century sculptor covered it afresh with a fine design in scroll work not unlike the lintel of St. Trophime at Arles. This lintel has an inscription in verse signed by the troubadour Pierre de Provence, and dated 1178.

But the interest of La Maguelone does not lie in the merit of this or that architectural detail. It is the romantic setting of the whole island and the memory of its vanished glories that lends so rare a charm to this ancient *domus ecclesiæ*. Once seen, it is a place that haunts the imagination. For did not the story of St. Brandon and his fairy isle stir our hearts as children, and were there not other saints who sought rest and blessing across the far ocean in islands with pine trees set in a blue sea?

Mademoiselle Fabrège, the present owner of Maguelone, carries on the tradition of her father in her care of church and island. There was nothing grudging or reluctant about our guide—nothing of that gleeful spirit of "On ne visite pas aujourd'hui" and a door slammed in your face, to which minor political appointments in the matter of keepers of buildings and museums often lead in France. The gardener's wife, who acted as our guide, was, in her way, filled with enthusiasm for the place. She pointed out to us in the church, not only the tombs of four mediæval bishops, but those of the Fabrège family brought to the island for burial. The altar, consecrated by Pope Alexander III. in 1163, is of great antiquity. On it was a form of decoration I have never seen before or since—two brass vases filled with peacocks' feathers. I questioned our pleasant guide as to their meaning. "They are the eyes of the pope, Madame, watching the congregation," was her reply. "Our altar decorations never vary here: on the greatest feast day it is as you see it now."

We spent some time in the church among debris of sarcophagi and mediæval carvings assembled in the nave. Then we began our short exploration of the island. The country house near the church was built by Monsieur Fabrège. We were also as a special favour shown the library, converted to that use from the ruined chapel of St. Blaise, where this student and historian of La Maguelone did his work. The garden, though it had run somewhat wild, was an enchanting place. Both trees and flowering shrubs had been planted. Pines, tamarisks, palms, oleanders, yuccas, roses, all grew and prospered on this volcanic rock. Vineyards just coming into leaf sloped

downwards to the water's edge. From the garden looking northwards to Montpellier was a wide view embracing coast, sea, and lagoon, bounded on the far horizon by the distant Cevennes. Northwards, too, a long causeway stretched across the lagoon ending in a tiny landing-place. This was the causeway from the village of Villeneuve on the mainland—Villeneuve also a flourishing port in bygone days, before the restless energy of sea and river had between them silted up the entrance to the lagoons for vessels even of moderate size. We lingered in the garden, loth to tear ourselves away. But for the low thunder of the Mediterranean near at hand, no sound disturbed the peace and silence of the hour.

Mr. John Buchan, in one of his tales, speaks of the beautiful northern legend of the Ocean Quiet or Breathing of God—the lull that falls at times on the human heart as well as on the sea after a period of storm and stress. Maguelone, far removed today from the ways of men, alive yet already translated, lives on for ever in such a spell of Ocean Quiet. Sometimes, as in the calm of this Sabbath evening, her soul stirs in its long sleep and whispers again of far-off things. But Greek and Roman, pope and cardinal, pirate and trader, troubadour and lady, have vanished beyond recall—their very dust long since a part again of the earth that gave them being. The church alone survives—a symbol, it may be, that in a changing world the things of the spirit persist, when every material form that spirit creates has perished.

The setting sun fell like a mantle of gold and purple over the island, and the old building, wrapped in its folds, accepted the coming of yet another night with something of regal resignation.

Let us be thankful that after centuries of neglect, care and faithful guardianship have stirred in it a measure of new life.

CHAPTER XXXII

ST. GUILHEM LE DÉSERT

The mountains of the Cevennes that hang in the distance behind Montpellier have many byways and forgotten strongholds little known to the tourist. Yet, for the people whose concern in travel is not so much to add daily to a bag of lions starred in the guide book but to recreate, if possible, the spirit of the past, Languedoc, like Provence, offers many opportunities. The remote districts of France are not staged for the traveller; little thought is given as to improving the appearance of inns or providing the amenities of life. But in some ways this state of affairs has its advantages. It tends to hold the restorer at bay, and though there may be dirt and neglect, at least sophistication and the fake spirit are lacking.

A Catholic country has always the advantage of local warmth and colour, thanks to the innumerable saints of the Roman Hierarchy, the memory of whose piety and works has been bound up with local tradition and local worship. The Reformers, with their long broom, swept away many superstitions, no doubt, but also much that was gracious and attractive in legend. The veneration of a district for the holy man or woman of whose life and work it was the scene has its historical interest. No one is the better for a drab world that can find no time to praise famous men and is indifferent to its famous saints. We cannot afford to extinguish one light that, in its day, testified to the things of the spirit. Those who adventure the most eagerly in the boundless possibilities of the future, and who see in it opportunities of new joy and new beauty, will always deal tenderly with the past. For even superstition and error may have grown out of some root of truth, and progress lies not in an indiscriminating application of the axe but in a sense of values as to the relation of ideas. The

beliefs that humanity treasured in its childishness and ignorance may provoke a smile today. But they come to us across the centuries, bearing the marks of that strange search of man after God—a quest to which the human heart returns and returns again.

The age of Charlemagne was in a special sense the age of saints and heroes. It was a moment when the raw material of a Europe yet to be lay hot and molten in the crucible of fate. Many references have been made in this book to the confusion that overtook the world after the collapse of the Roman Empire. Barbarians from the north, Mohammedans from the south, had overwhelmed the old classical civilisation. New counters were on the board. Christianity had struggled into authority and maintained itself precariously like a raft on angry waters. Charles Martel, the Hammer, had stemmed the tide of Saracenic conquest; Charlemagne had given a new, if temporary, unity to the distracted remnants of the Roman Empire. It was an age of movement, of growth, of uncertainty. The hazard of life must have been terrific in those days, when fire and slaughter hung a point of interrogation over every worldly venture. Times such as these throw up all that is best and all that is worst in human nature. Great criminals and great heroes, great saints and great sinners, are found not only side by side but not infrequently changing sides.

In the Lower Cevennes, near Aniane, the village and church of St. Guilhem le Désert still preserve the memory of one of the most famous among Charlemagne's knights. There are few places more strange and more remarkable among the ancient monasteries of France. Some twenty-five miles from Montpellier the rapid stream of the Hérault (the river gives its name to the department) forces its way out of the limestone gorges through which it descends from the hills. The road lies through Aniane, famous in the days of Louis the Débonnaire as the principal monastic establishment of the Carolingian Empire. Aniane today is a crumbling neglected little town, but its decayed and semi-demolished churches bear marks of an importance long since vanished. It is a delightful drive from Montpellier across the plain to the foot of the hills. The soil is rich

and heavily cultivated. Vines, olives, ilexes, and the homely fruits of the earth all flourish against the setting of the grey hills. Then suddenly the scene changes. The Hérault issues abruptly from its gorge with every sign of rage at the handling it has received from the rocks above. A bridge of four arches flung across the stream at this point has a modern parapet, but it was built in the eleventh century, and has stood the wear and tear of traffic for nearly a thousand years. At this place, so the legend runs, Guilhem had a terrible turn with the Devil. Needless to say, the struggle ended by the saint hurling the fiend into the torrent below—hence the name of the bridge. So narrow is this gateway to the road that threads its way through the gorge, so abrupt the hairpin-bend immediately above the bridge, that we halted at the foot of the cliffs in some perplexity as to our route. Beneath the Pont du Diable lay the Gouffre Noire, the Black Gulf, which, after the manner of whirlpools, showed black, silent, and ominous among the angry waters of the stream. I know of better places to turn a touring-car than the Pont du Diable and the Gorges of the Hérault. However, in due course we found our way up a winding gorge that grew more and more narrow as we followed the right bank of the rushing stream. Limestone crags of the most fantastic shapes lined the gorge, flinging up here and there into sharp relief the clumps of heavy green ilex that clung precariously to the rocks. I do not know Delphi, but have heard it said that the road to St. Guilhem le Désert through the gorges of the Hérault recalls the more famous approach to the Greek shrine.

Finally the road, squeezed in previously like a vice, began to show signs of a trifle more elbow-room. Above us rose the escarpments of the Causse de Larzac, and shortly before St. Guilhem is reached the Clamouse falls in a cascade into the bed of the river. At last a small gorge opened out to our left; a cleft in the reluctant hills through which dashed another stream eager to hurl its waters into the Hérault. A few houses huddled under the high walls of the cliffs, and some round towers and water-wheels—half mills, half fortresses—stood at the mouth of this new valley. Narrow though the opening is, the valley had widened as it fought

its way back into the hills. Perched high on a limestone pinnacle in the distance was the incredible ruin of a still more incredible castle. Nearer at hand we caught a glimpse of a fine Romanesque apse. This was the gorge of the Verdus, and we had arrived at St. Guilhem le Désert.

Our persons and our car promptly became a field of battle, over which an Homeric struggle was waged by the two proprietors of the local cabarets. The mundane question of food has to be reckoned with even on excursions devoted to archæology. "On peut y manger convenablement," the concierge of the Montpellier hotel had remarked vaguely and hopefully as he sped us on our way; but, at first sight, the resources of St. Guilhem le Désert in this respect appeared to be limited. The alternative lay between one of two squalid inns, miserable in appearance though extolled as rival Claridges by their respective owners. We made our choice, though I am still haunted by the fear that our passage may have left a blood feud in that remote valley. A rickety staircase led to the upper room of a house hanging on the side of the rock, and, once installed, we found that we had fallen among pleasant folk. Madame, Monsieur, and their children exhausted themselves in civilities. One brought a bunch of flowers, another a long truncheon of bread; a small boy put his head in at the door and flourished a tin of truffles before our hungry eyes. Through the united efforts of the family, knives and plates appeared, and, in due course, a meal appeared of the quality and excellence that French skill is able to conjure up in the most unlikely surroundings. *Vin du pays* of a rich and heady kind was also produced. So the words of the Montpellier concierge certainly proved true, and we ate and drank, let us hope, *convenablement* at St. Guilhem.

This remote village in a cleft of the Cevennes has for more than a thousand years preserved the memory of a hero of the Carolingian age, whose personality, enlarged by legend and myth, has assumed Brocken-like proportions. His name is handed down in many fashions as Guillaume, Duke of Aquitaine and Count of Toulouse; Guillaume, grandson of Charles Martel, cousin of Charlemagne; Guillaume au Nez Court; Guillaume d'Orange of a famous

chanson de geste; finally, St. Guillaume de Gellone, warrior turned saint and founder of the abbey in the gorge of the Verdus. At once warrior and monk, paladin and recluse, the flail of the Saracens and a saint to this day venerated by the humble peasants of Languedoc, Guilhem, very hero of an epic age, still lives on in the song and legend of Southern France. Tradition, in remote districts where conditions remain much the same century after century and few disturbing ideas or events occur, generally rests on some basis of truth, and the degree to which St. Guilhem still enters into the history and worship of Languedoc proves that this follower of Charlemagne must have left a broad mark on his surroundings. We see him first as a warrior and fighting man, giving and taking redoubtable blows in the long struggle against the Saracenic invaders of the age. He was sent apparently by Charlemagne to the Septimania in 790, after the Count of Toulouse had been beaten by the Vacons. He led a victorious campaign through Languedoc and into Spain. Carcassonne was the scene of a great battle with the Saracens, where he killed a Mohammedan king with his own hands. He then retook Narbonne, and, sweeping through Spain, besieged Barcelona. Like all the semi-mythical heroes of the Carolingian age, he fought with giants. One giant he killed near Paris, another in the Château du Géant, or Don Juan, whose ruins stand on the crag above the Verdus gorge. He was apparently twice married, and the world smiled on this favourite of fortune and gave him of its best in fame, happiness, and success.

Then, how or why we know not, for legend is silent on this point, came a mighty change in this career of worldly glory and power. In that rude age, with its insecurities of life and the hazard of death an ever-present one, there were constant revulsions, as we have seen elsewhere, from the violence of the world to the peace of the cloister. We cannot tell whether, through long years of battle, Guilhem had in his heart cherished some secret ideal of the religious life. Whatever the reason of the change, it was overwhelming and complete. The paladin becomes a humble and austere monk. At the church of St. Julien de Brioude

in Auvergne, Guilhem made the great renunciation. He covered the altar with his gifts, laying on it further his shield, his buckler, his two-edged sword. His armour and his splendid clothes were exchanged for a rough cassock. Instead of leading an army and laying siege to cities, he founded an abbey with cloisters, hospital, refectory, and endowed it with his great wealth. Here he cared for the poor and the sick, labouring in the field or engaged in the rough work of building his church.

The spot chosen by Guilhem for his retreat was this remote and rugged valley at the junction of the Verdus and the Hérault. Guilhem was on terms of intimate friendship with St. Benoît d'Aniane—Aniane, the shabby little town through which we had passed on our way to the mountains, and a famous monastic centre long centuries ago. Guilhem was not far removed from Aniane and the counsel and advice of his friend. It was in the valley of the Verdus, therefore, that Guilhem founded the abbey of Gellone in the year 804. Here the closing years of Guilhem's life were passed in good works and meditation. Were there ever moments when the spirit of the warrior woke again in the recluse ? For the valley preserves the tradition not only of his fight with the giant, but of a great feat of horsemanship, when he cleared the Verdus gorge at one leap. He became head of the abbey, and an object of extraordinary veneration to the peasants of the Hérault. On the day of his death, so the legend ran, the bells of all the churches in the neighbouring provinces rang out a mournful peal. Guilhem au Court Nez, hero and saint, had gone to his long rest.

It is a thankless task to throw doubt on any features of a legend so attractive as this one, but I am sorry to say a very pretty ecclesiastical row was responsible for no small measure of the saint's posthumous fame. St. Guilhem, Count of Toulouse, is in no sense an apocryphal person, and was undoubtedly a great figure at the court of Charlemagne. A son of that beautiful woman La Belle Ande, and a grandson of the redoubtable Hammer Charles Martel, he was related by close family ties to the emperor. He fought many campaigns against infidels

and Saracens, and, his active work finished, became a monk at Aniane. The great monastery at Aniane did not fulfil the conditions of utter solitude to which the paladin aspired. With the goodwill of his friend St. Benoît, Guilhem retired to the higher waters of the Hérault and founded the monastery of Gellone, now known as Guilhem le Désert, in the valley of the Verdus. There he died soon afterwards. The establishment must have been on a small and humble scale. There was no road at that time up the river gorge, and no approach to the Verdus Valley save by goat tracks. These events took place probably in the first decade of the ninth century, and there is a contemporary account of them written by a monk at Aniane. All this was gallant and credible, but it lacked the glowing details of the hero of the eleventh and twelfth centuries. There for a time matters rested.

The relations of the mother house at Aniane and the daughter house at Gellone were for some generations intimate and undisputed. But two hundred years after the death of St. Guilhem a struggle for supremacy arose between the two abbeys, which brought their respective chapters into collision so sharp that we find them in shrill dispute at Rome before the pope himself. Each place laid prior claim to the saint, the abbey at Gellone asserting its entire independence from the mother house at Aniane. And when we come to look closer as to the origins of this feud, once again we find ourselves confronted with the old story of relics and the revenues that accrued from them. St. Guilhem was rich in relics. It owned not only the body of the saint, but a fragment of the True Cross and other valuable possessions. Consequently pilgrims with their alms as well as their prayers found their way in increasing numbers up the valley of the Hérault, now provided with a road and a bridge. St. Guilhem was not far removed from the road to Toulouse, and pilgrims either to Conques and Racamadour or the remoter shrine of Compostela could visit it *en route*. With the pilgrims came affluence and a great increase of material prosperity. The community at Aniane looked on with growing jealousy till they could bear it no longer, and carried their claims and their clamour

to Rome. No less necessary was it for the monks at Gellone to justify their position by painting the picture of the saint in more and more glowing colours. The old Hammer's grandson was deliberately written up. Do not let us imagine for a moment that the modern journalist was the first to discover and exploit this gentle art. Immense success waited on the monks' efforts. They were fortunate in their hour, and in the popular passion for poetry and romance, fostered by the troubadours and the jongleurs. Authors of the *chansons de geste* only asked for a hero to serve as a peg for semi-mythical exploits. And in Guilhem au Court Nez they found a paladin after their very hearts.

"Voilà le chef d'œuvre qu'avaient réalisé les moines de Gellone," writes Monsieur André Joubin in an interesting article on St. Guilhem le Désert.* "Qui songerait à leur reprocher d'avoir un peu triché afin de le garder tout entier pour eux?"

And I can only echo, Who indeed?

The little village of St. Guilhem, squeezed into the narrow gorge of the Verdus, must look much the same today as it did eight hundred years ago. A small son of the *patron* constituted himself our guide, and led us up a rocky path on the right bank of the stream. The gorge opened out as we went higher, and ends in a fine *cirque* of rocks. The houses are mostly on the left bank of the stream, so tightly pinned on a narrow shelf between the water and the rock that the river often tunnels below the straggling village street. From the opposite bank there is an interesting view of this strange-looking place. From this point also the striking Romanesque church, with its three apses, comes into sight. This old building, though a treasure of the Hérault, like many treasures, unfortunately, is much mutilated. It has a narthex and a nave, with four bays covered by a barrel vault and narrow side aisles similarly vaulted. The *chevet* consists of an apse and a transept, with two apsidioles. The church, as we should expect, has been frequently reconstructed. Of the primitive Carolingian building nothing remains. It was a hermitage

* "Aspects Archéologiques du Languedoc Méditerranéen," *Revue Archéologique*, 5ème série, tome xiii., Avril-Juin, 1921.

roughly built and roughly roofed. With the opening of the Devil's Bridge about 1040, the transport of both pilgrims and materials was facilitated, and it was then possible to set to work and raise a church worthy of the saint. The nave and side aisles of the present church formed part of the eleventh-century building. As at Maguelone, there is a large gallery over the western bays of the nave, which was used probably as a singing gallery. The *chevet*, with its transept and three apses, is an example of accomplished Romanesque architecture, and belongs probably to the first half of the twelfth century. But clearly it was destined to form the east end of a much larger building than the present aisle to which it is tacked on. Probably the monks had a further enlargement of the church in view, and hoped to build a nave worthy of the beautiful *chevet*. If so, the design was never carried out, owing to what change of plans or lack of money we cannot say. There is a curious feature on the apsidal arch, an opening in the form of a cross that floods the sanctuary with symbolic light. The narthex, roofed with ogival vaulting, belongs to the end of the twelfth century. There is a statement in a mediæval text to the effect that it was built after the Council held at Albi in 1165, so that the Albigensian penitents, shepherded by fire and sword back into orthodoxy, could make their act of submission to the Church without sullying the nave. Inside the church is plain, not to say severe. It owes everything to its proportions and nothing to ornament, but the exterior lines are imposing and beautiful. It is easy to see from the outside how little relation the apse has to the modest nave it ends. The appearance of the *chevet* is very rich. The central apse is decorated with a Lombard band of blind arcading that runs like a frieze under the cornice. The three windows are enclosed by arches resting on clustered columns. There is a plain tower at the west end, and the whole appearance of the church in its narrow valley, overhung by mountains, is romantic and unusual.

We made the acquaintance of Monsieur le Curé, an excellent type of parish priest, who took us over the church and the ruins of the cloisters. The cloisters, formerly lined with tombs, have suffered severely, and a few fragments of

arcading alone remain today. But monastic life has not come to an end at St. Guilhem. A new monastery was being built when the Great War broke out, though its construction was necessarily brought to a standstill. The church is not neglected, and the good priest showed us its treasures with pride.

The chapel, opening on the north arm of the transept, has been turned into the Musée Lapidaire, and here are preserved some very remarkable fragments of sculpture, including marble *entrelacs* of the Carolingian period. The chief treasure is a beautiful altar consecrated in 1138 as a resting-place for the relics of St. Guilhem. It is a precious mixture of mosaic and panels of white marble carved in very low relief. On one side Christ appears on the Cross between St. John and the Virgin; on the other He sits enthroned among symbols of the four Evangelists. An early Christian sarcophagus of the sixth or seventh century is carved with a variety of scenes from the Old and New Testaments. Though no trace of monumental sculpture remains today, it is possible that St. Guilhem had once a portal decorated with scenes from the Last Judgment. In the museum at Montpellier, and also at the university, there are a series of bas reliefs of Apostles and Elders of the Apocalypse that came, according to Monsieur Mâle, from St. Guilhem le Désert.* The School of Toulouse radiated, as we saw, far and wide, and Monsieur Mâle claims these fine bas reliefs as yet another proof of the influence of the Last Judgment at Moissac on meridional church sculpture. Certainly both at Aniane and St. Pons *ateliers* existed where sculpture of high quality was produced. Nearly all of it has disappeared, thanks to the civil and religious troubles of later centuries.

Until recent years the church at St. Guilhem had some curious pictures which, whether or not of artistic value, would have had a legendary interest, as showing current conceptions about the life of the saint. But in the interests of restoration they have all been swept aside. One of St. Guilhem crossing the Verdus on horseback was actually destroyed many years ago by the curé of the day.

* Mâle, "L'Art Religieux du 12ème Siècle," p. 380.

Two sisters of Guilhem, the Ladies Albane and Bertane, followed their brother to the Verdus gorge, so the legend ran, and, like him, dedicated themselves to the religious life. Here they built a nunnery, where they died. This remote valley of the Hérault became a considerable ecclesiastical establishment in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. As we made our way back to the main road through the village street, there were signs here and there among its huddled houses and narrow alley-ways of occupation once by more important folk than the humble peasants of today. When every allowance is made for the accretions that grew round his legend, this warrior saint of the ninth century, whose closing years were passed in the solitude of the Cevennes, remains a striking figure. " Il y a créé un de ces foyers de civilisation et de lumière," says a French writer, and the flight of more than a thousand years has not extinguished the light.

PART VII

NORMANDY AND ÎLE DE FRANCE

CHAPTER XXXIII

THE GOTHIC TRANSITION

In Chapters I. and II. of this book I sketched the slow evolution of church building from classical to Carolingian times. During the eleventh and early twelfth centuries we saw how Romanesque architecture spread over Europe, creating monuments that bear remarkable witness to the vitality and power of the age. In subsequent chapters we passed from church to church in the centre, the south, and the west of France, and saw how frequently, under the inspiration of Cluny, abbeys were built not only of vast dimensions but of superb quality. It now remains in this final section to say a few words about the culmination of the movement and the structural discoveries and changes that led to the new architectural forms we call Gothic. It is in the north and north-east of France that this evolution must be studied. If the south played a dominant part in the creation of Romanesque architecture, the north is no less dominant when we come to the Gothic period. Here Normandy and Île de France step to the front and hold the place of honour. But the history of the change is full of gaps and blanks, and the ground is often as uncertain as during the earlier period.

We become conscious in Normandy that some new hunt is up as early as the end of the eleventh century. In Île de France, Artois, Picardy, and Champagne the sense of change is still more marked. The Romanesque period in this part of France produced neither a Cluny, nor a Vézelay, nor a St. Sernin, nor an Aulnay. The schools of the north and north-east are somewhat vague and inchoate. But again it is necessary to remember that Norman pirates did their work very thoroughly in the Royal Domain, and many churches perished, leaving little or no record behind them. Further, that the new style, when evolved,

was so popular that existing churches were either wholly rebuilt or reconstructed with ogival vaulting. In these circumstances little evidence is left of the buildings of an earlier period.

One thing at least is clear. If architects and builders in this area seem to have been less attuned to the Romanesque spirit than in Burgundy and south of the Loire, they were to give outstanding proofs of genius in another direction. Romanesque architecture in Northern France did not follow a line of evolution from primitive to more perfect forms. Development becomes a revolution and a break-away into an entirely new system. Northern architects, who never seem to have been thoroughly at home among Romanesque ideas, were to discover new principles that sent the great cathedrals of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries soaring up to heaven. Île de France is the cradle of Gothic, and any account of Romanesque architecture in this area merges rapidly into the history of an amazing transformation.

It is the ogival vault, not as sometimes wrongly stated the pointed arch, that determined the great developments of the Gothic style. The pointed arch was frequently used during the Romanesque period, as it was found in practice that the higher pitch it gave the vault reduced the thrust on the walls. For the real problem of the mediæval builder, and one that long baffled him, was how to vault his church successfully in stone. I have referred constantly in this book to the terrific thrust exercised by the barrel and the groined vault on the walls of a building. During the Romanesque period churches had in consequence to be designed on massive lines, and windows presented a great difficulty. It was dangerous to weaken walls, on whose strength the security of the whole structure depended, by openings in the masonry. Even clerestory windows were only pierced at the risk of the vaults collapsing—large numbers of vaults, in fact, fell in. As we saw in Auvergne, Poitou, and elsewhere, the difficulty was met by vaulting the side aisles with a quarter circle which acted as a buttress for the vault of the nave. This made for greater safety, but churches so treated could be lighted

only from the side aisles, and their interiors were apt to be very dim.

Windows with stone tracery do not exist in the Romanesque period. The great churches of Southern and Central France lie in warm and sunny latitudes, where questions of light are of less importance than under the grey skies of Northern Europe. The builders of the north naturally viewed the problem from another angle, but so long as the barrel and the groined vault held the field, window space was necessarily reduced to a minimum.

Then what seems to us in retrospect a very simple and a very obvious expedient was adopted. It occurred to some person or persons that the groined vault could be strengthened by running two diagonal ribs along its outline. A vault so reinforced distributed the pressure at four points, and did not exert the same continuous thrust on the walls. The expedient was found to work, and so the ogival or rib vault, the essential feature of Gothic architecture, came into being. The very derivation of the word ogival (from the Latin *augere*, to reinforce) explains its function. Simple though this development may seem, it led to a complete revolution in architecture. Instead of a heavy barrel or groined vault pressing downwards and sideways, the same space was now divided into four, or sometimes six, independent compartments; and between each reinforcing arch ran two diagonal ribs, forming a permanent armature or framework. At this stage the pointed arch proved a powerful auxiliary, for it was possible to bring pointed arches of different spans up to the same keystone—a process impossible with the round arch. As these new principles came into play, architects and builders found, doubtless to their amazement, that a revolution had taken place. The Gothic church is no longer a mass of stone grimly holding together by its own weight, but an organic framework of ribs, vaults, and arches, with thrusts and strains distributed and balanced and carried by the piers to earth. One final adjustment was required, and it followed rapidly. Ogival vaulting concentrates the thrust of the vault at certain points. Unrelieved, the thrust on these points would have pushed out the piers. The difficulty was met and

overcome by the application externally of the device known as the flying buttress—a pier with a half-arch propping from without the point of junction internally of the pier and the vault. The flying buttress, ensuring as it does the stability of the ogival vault, is the second essential element in Gothic. These new principles made the architect master in his own house. A mass of masonry is now transformed into an organic framework of adjusted balance and rhythm. Walls no longer carry vaults, but are mere shells encircling the building. Large and elaborate windows can be opened up without danger of any kind, and the glories of the twelfth- and thirteenth-century glass show how eagerly the mediæval glass makers seized on their new opportunities. The architect can, as at Beauvais, raise his aisles to almost fantastic heights, and execute *tours de force* in stone and glass as a virtuoso might improvise on the piano.

All this was not done in a night. Nearly a hundred years went to the elaboration of the Gothic vault, and I have sometimes wondered whether Suger himself would not have been scandalised by the exuberance of the later Gothic. We may be quite certain that the men who experimented with the first ogival ribs had no visions of Amiens, Rheims, or Chartres before their eyes. They were practical men, occupied with a harassing problem in building, and never dreamt of the soaring naves and vast windows of the later Gothic cathedrals. But, like Saul, the son of Kish, who went out to find his father's asses, in the course of fulfilling that pedestrian duty they found a kingdom.

The transition from Romanesque to Gothic came about therefore quite naturally, and, like many great discoveries, these new principles were first applied without any idea of the revolution they were to cause. Few theories are more fantastic than that of the supposed hostility of Gothic and Romanesque. The one evolves naturally and inevitably from the other. Neither was Gothic the expression of the lay mind as distinct from the monastic: the first Gothic architects, with Suger at their head, were monks. The churches of the transition have at first all the features of the Romanesque style. Ogival vaults with heavy ribs

are mixed with other vaults, round with pointed arches, windows are small and few, flying buttresses are concealed by a roof. But as the stability of the ogival vault became clear, development leapt ahead. The organic quality revealed led to new and daring experiments and turned the whole course of building into unexpected channels.

These great changes in architecture corresponded to changes no less profound in the national life. By the end of the twelfth century France is beginning to find herself as a nation. The task of consolidation carried on by the Capetian kings had stirred new forces into being, and it is easy to understand why in the Royal Domain architecture proved specially sensitive to the changed national outlook.

Many references have been made in this book to Philip Augustus and the services he rendered in the welding of conflicting duchies and vassal states into one kingdom. The victory of Bouvines (1214) against the English and their northern allies is a date of capital importance in the history of France. The tide set definitely against Plantagenet domination. Little by little the English were driven out of Aquitaine, Normandy, Maine, and Anjou, and though they clung on tenaciously to Bordeaux and other territories in the south, the hour of their supremacy in the north was over. During the Hundred Years' War they came as invaders, not as established rulers, till finally expelled in 1451, save for Calais and the Channel Islands. The task of victory and consolidation went forward during the reigns of Philip's successors, Louis VIII. and Louis IX. Other forces had entered the field. The thirteenth century marks the steady growth not only of royalty but of civic liberty in France. It was the age of the communes, when secular authority for the first time in modern Europe begins to play a leading part in public affairs. The unchallenged authority of monasticism is over. The universities are coming to the fore, and learning is no longer centred in the abbeys. The torch of culture kept alive by monks and abbots in an earlier generation has now lighted a hundred fires in secular life. For the moment there is no conflict between the secular and the ecclesiastical power, but reli-

gious life takes a different turn. The civic consciousness of the thirteenth century felt a special pride in church buildings, and raised great cathedrals as an expression both of piety and citizenship. To this extent, and to this extent alone, abbeys are an expression of the monastic, as cathedrals are of the lay mind. There was no conscious clash between the old order and the new, but monasticism, as a way of life for the many instead of for the few, gives way to a new conception of citizenship. The situation of an earlier date, when any man who could read or write was necessarily a "clerk," and bound, or supposed to be bound, by vows of celibacy, laid an intolerable burthen on the human spirit. As Mr. Trevelyan has pointed out,* this ideal implied that almost all professional and educated men could have no legitimate children, and had lamentable results on the moral standard of the age. The normal man is not born to live under clerical control, and the transfer of authority from the ecclesiastical to the secular power, gradual though the process, has corresponded at every stage with intellectual growth and development. But this fact in no whit lessens the debt of gratitude that civilisation owes in a dark hour to monasticism and to the great Churchmen who, in a rude age, were guardians of culture and learning.

To return to the ogival vault: it is a moot point in archæology as to where it came from. There is nothing inherently improbable in the view that the principle may have been arrived at independently in different parts of Europe. If your vault constantly falls in, what more natural than to try and hold it up by running two supporting ribs along the outline traced by the groins? In point of time it is more than probable that Lombard architects were first in the field, though they do not appear to have realised all the implications of their own discovery. Their claim to priority is disputed by the Normans, who certainly used ogival vaults at an early date. We must not forget, however, that two great Lombard Churchmen, William of Volpiano and Lanfranc, filled important posts in Normandy during the eleventh century, and probably brought

* "History of England," p. 129.

Italian ideas and, it may be, Italian workers with them. Be that as it may, early ogival vaults exist in Normandy, and under Norman influence were used at Durham Cathedral before the end of the eleventh century. But wherever the ogival vault originated—and architects may dispute to the end of time over that question—one fact is sure and certain: it was in Île de France, and under the rule of Abbot Suger at St. Denis, that the principles of the new vault were worked out and its immense implications discovered. It is difficult to date the village churches of Picardy and Île de France with exactness, but the consecration of St. Denis in 1144 may be taken as the official birthday of Gothic. It was at Suger's new church that the "style français," as it should be called, emerged in nearly perfect form, and all that remains to be done is to elaborate the principles then for the first time fully applied.*

It is impossible for me in a book on Romanesque France to cast more than a glance at the great field of architecture presented by England. But when speaking of the evolution of Gothic in France we must not lose sight of the splendid and almost parallel developments that took place in our own country. Two kingdoms closely united by ties of conquest and government naturally reacted on one another in matters of culture and architecture. The Channel was no obstacle to the free passage of statesmen and ecclesiastics, many of whom held office sometimes in England, sometimes in France. Ideas as well as men came and went across the narrow seas. The Normans, as we shall see, built on a scale even grander in England than in their native Normandy, and in English soil the new architectural ideas struck root and prospered exceedingly. Monsieur Enlart regards Durham Cathedral as perhaps the earliest transitional church in existence. The ogival vaults in the

* Monsieur Michel sums up the position perfectly in the following words: "Où furent construits les premiers arcs ogifs et par qui ? On serait assez embarrassé de décider entre les competitions rétrospectives des archéologues rivaux. Mais il n'est pas douteux que c'est en France que le système nouveau s'élabora, prit si l'on peut dire conscience de tous ses moyens et se constitua définitivement en vivant organisme pour se répandre ensuite en Europe et au delà des mers."—Michel, "Histoire de l'Art," tome ii., p. v.

nave have given rise to much controversy, and some archæologists, Monsieur de Lasteyrie among them, puzzled by their precocity, have suggested that they owe their existence to reconstruction in the twelfth century. But the most recent opinion looks upon the earlier date, towards the end of the eleventh century, as now established. Durham Cathedral proves the power and vigour of the Anglo-Norman style, and the noble cathedrals of the later twelfth and thirteenth centuries are an adequate witness to the fact that England in no way lagged behind France when the great developments of the Gothic period took place.

Sometimes it is possible to trace a direct link between two churches in England and France that bear marks of identical influence. Roche Abbey in Yorkshire was built by the Cistercian order in the dawn of the Gothic period. Though completely ruined today, enough remains to prove its close relationship with the Cistercian church of St. Jean d'Aupt in Savoy. Canterbury Cathedral, built by William of Sens, has many analogies with Sens Cathedral in Burgundy. Chichester, Lincoln, Westminster Abbey, all bear strong marks of French influence. But England, in receiving French inspiration, was no servile imitator. She developed English Gothic after her own fashion, set on it the imprint of a powerful personality, and dowered it with new and original forms. In the early days there are close affinities between the Gothic churches of the two countries, but they diverge more and more as time goes on. During the fifteenth century we see a reverse process taking place, for France then received from England the principles of the Flamboyant style which she in turn adapted and transformed to meet her own needs.

The false and ugly term Gothic applied to an architectural development due primarily to the French genius is one of the grievous misnomers of history. It was used as a term of contempt during the Renaissance by certain superior persons of the ordinary myopic type. Be classical or perish was the slogan of the hour. Monsieur Enlart remarks angrily but aptly we might as well speak of Boche as of Gothic architecture. Gothic, so called, had

no more to do with the Goths than with the Choctaw Indians. The new architectural methods originated and perfected in Île de France were known throughout Europe in the thirteenth century as *opus francigenum*—French style. It was from France that the new style radiated into other lands, and especially in England attained great magnificence. Philibert de l'Orme in the sixteenth century writes of a Gothic vault as " voûte à la mode française."

Whatever the question of ultimate origins and of the special forms elaborated subsequently in England, Gothic art originated in France, and we owe the name merely to the mannerism of men who despised the Middle Ages and all their works. It is said that the first use of the expression can be traced to Raphael, but France must shoulder her own share of responsibility for the abuses heaped on monuments that are the glory of her race. Montaigne, Boileau, Racine, Molière, La Bruyère, Jean Jacques Rousseau, all express themselves in varying degrees of contempt when speaking of mediæval architecture. It is only fair to remember that the canons of the eighteenth century, who worked such devastation among Romanesque churches, and were the special wreckers of *jubés*, could justify their action by an appeal to the literary standards of the day. Though Gothic has lost the sense of its opprobrious origin, the term persists, and it would be precious and pedantic today to use any other. The error in phraseology is fully recognised, but words have a terrible vitality, and France, whose *amour propre* is most at stake in the matter, must make the best of a bad business.

A history of the Gothic transition would fill a volume, and I can only touch in briefest outline on its main features. It is a wonderful moment in architecture when the Romanesque style begins to take on a new aspect and explore new principles. Needless to say, no hard-and-fast line can be drawn with Romanesque on the one side and Gothic on the other. All that we can say is that between 1140 and 1180 architecture and sculpture both undergo a change. We are not conscious of it at the beginning of the period beyond an impression of enhanced power and beauty and a sense of greater freedom of execution. But by the

end of the century we realise that a revolution has taken place.

French Gothic was to win its greatest triumphs in the north of France, as Romanesque at an earlier date had raised its noblest monuments in the centre and south. Experiments with ogival vaulting had not been confined to the north. Among the places described in this book we remarked the use of ogival vaults at Vézelay, at St. Gilles, at St. Guilhem le Désert, at Maguelone, at Moissac. But though Gothic churches spread throughout France, the centre and the south never accepted the new development with the same enthusiasm as the north. Gothic in spite of some fine exceptions to the rule remained rather an interloper in the districts where Roman influence had been strongest, and Southern France clung as though by hereditary attachment to the round arch and to principles more in line with the Roman tradition.

If architecture enters a wholly new phase during the last half of the twelfth century, no less remarkable are the developments in sculpture. Growing mastery of technique and increased assurance in method led to the creation of monumental statuary on a magnificent scale. Mouldings are finer and more skilfully executed; the rich iconography of the Romanesque period is at once simplified and more systematically arranged. A scheme of decoration to be mentioned when I speak of Chartres was worked out and applied to the portals of the new cathedrals. But I cannot agree with the attitude commonly met with in books that Gothic sculpture all along the line was an improvement on the halting performance of its Romanesque predecessor. The superb moment at Chartres and elsewhere is the moment when it is impossible to say whether Romanesque is alight with fresh fire or Gothic is drawing its power and strength from the hour that is passing. Any generalisation about Romanesque sculpture as rude and archaic is frankly absurd in the light of such work as the Seasons and Virtues at Cluny, the Eve of Autun, or the exquisite Daurade capitals at Toulouse. The early Gothic sculptors were men of genius. The portals of Chartres, Notre Dame de Paris, Rheims, Amiens, are works of art

that stand on a pinnacle of human achievement. But the nearer the building to the Romanesque source the finer the quality of the stream. The west door of Chartres belongs to the early transition, and it is one of the world's greatest monuments. Gothic sculpture had losses as much as gains. Instead of the historiated capital with its infinite variety of subject, we have a foliage capital, beautiful in its early days, but, as time goes on, growing more and more monotonous. Animals and strange beasts disappear, and are replaced by flowers and leaves from the fields of France. St. Bernard had not preached in vain, and Cistercian influence, it must be remembered, was very strong at the end of the twelfth century. Hence the greater note of austerity in this form of decoration, and the elimination of the monsters against whom St. Bernard had inveighed. The early Gothic capitals have some animals mixed with the foliage, but they soon drop out. Gothic sculptors have been hailed with some exaggeration as the first students of nature, but the Romanesque sculptors, as we know, had already given proofs of their skill in the same field. If in the beginning they were forced to draw their models from ivories and miniatures and other flat objects, many historiated capitals of the twelfth century are studied from nature.

As with architecture so with sculpture—the earliest phase of the new development is the best. As Gothic grows up and learns how to do everything and how to solve every problem, an impression of monotony and dryness makes itself felt. These later developments lie far beyond the borderland where Romanesque and Gothic meet, and I cannot speak of them here. But as we leave the twelfth century a great moral is surely writ clear across her monuments. Facility is the curse that waits on all human achievement. The moment that you can do a thing without effort and without struggle the soul has gone out of it. In the later thirteenth and fourteenth centuries Gothic becomes a facile repetition of themes not only stereotyped but outworn. The crocket that nods its head from the pillars of innumerable churches all over Europe becomes deadly monotonous. Classical art had run through

a similar cycle and had known the same exhaustion. Perfection carries in it the root of decay. It is only in the sweat of his face that man eats bread. Cake and pastry may be had perhaps on easier terms, but the bread of life exacts a stern discipline. Seed time, harvest, and winter—great periods of artistic and intellectual development would appear to run through seasons akin to those of the natural order. And for a generation whose lot is cast in a phase of exhaustion the moral surely lies not in any contemplation of grain piled up by other men in barns, but in the faith and courage that sallies forth under an autumn sky to scatter a handful of seed above the furrows of a new purpose.

CHAPTER XXXIV

SOME PERSONS AND CHURCHES IN NORMANDY

In no part of France can an English person feel so entirely at home as in Normandy. Wake up among the meadows and orchards of that fertile province and there is nothing to indicate that you are not in Gloucestershire or some genial southern county of England. The fields have English-looking hedges. English-looking elms grow by the roadside; the woods are a familiar compound of beech, lime, and ash, with undergrowth of nut and birch. Thatch is rare in France, but a thatched cottage can be seen now and again in Normandy, and, to the British eye, adds another homely touch to the landscape. The farmhouses with their red roofs have a comfortable English air. Sleek cattle graze in fields, and the sheep look more plump and less depressed than the usual flocks of France. Churches and spires, and here and there a ruined keep, do not wear any air of novelty. All this is not unnatural when we remember that in the year of grace 1066 William the Bastard, William the Great, William the Conqueror, invaded our own land of England and defeated us very much for our good, disagreeable though the process must have been to our Anglo-Saxon ancestors. For the Conqueror brought with him not only the virility of a northern stock, but Franco-Norman laws and Franco-Norman learning and architecture. Many a noble abbey and cathedral in England still bears the imprint left by the race whose strange destiny carried them first in terms of fire and slaughter from Scandinavia to Northern France, thence after a period of conquest and consolidation to forge the links of a greater chain of destiny as kings of England.

It is clear that the Norman pirates, whose first appearance off the mouth of the Seine somewhere about the year 876 led to widespread panic throughout Northern France,

had latent within themselves other gifts than those of freebooters. Rollo, their leader, though graced subsequently by the title of Duke, was a pirate pure and simple, who carried out his job with Norman thoroughness. To bully the inept French king, Charles the Simple, was a task that presented him with few difficulties. But Rollo, a Norwegian, knew the value of Danegeld and the wisdom of not beating your head against a door that could be opened by purchase. By the Treaty of St. Clair-sur-Epte (A.D. 912) Rollo became a vassal duke—in name at least—of the French king. He was baptised, renounced Thor and Woden, and married the daughter of Charles the Simple. Though history is silent on the point, it is easy to appreciate the probable feelings of a terrified girl handed over to a pirate of Rollo's type in the interests of high policy. So Normandy, the land of the Northmen, takes its place in history, and the Normans for many a long day will prove prominent actors on the stage thus acquired.

Christianity sat very lightly on the first Norman duke, and still more lightly on his son, William Longsword. During the reign of the latter the duchy was further extended, owing to fresh pirate hordes brought in by him from Norway. But with the advent of Richard the Fearless (942-966) a great change came over the whole character of the Norman invaders. Fearless and energetic, they showed extraordinary power in absorbing the culture and ideals of a higher civilisation. The pirates became pious Christians, and burning and sacking gave place to church building and religious foundations on a large and splendid scale. Into the Crusades the Normans flung themselves with all the zeal of the convert, and were to have strange adventures in the Mediterranean and make new conquests in Sicily.

William the Conqueror, though he came of a remarkable stock, is without question one of the greatest figures of the Middle Ages. The millenary celebrations held at Caen in the summer of 1927 reminded the world that nine hundred years have passed since Duke William was born. Yet his work lives on, and the Conqueror himself, no shadowy figure but a virile and commanding personality, still dominates our text and history books. Stark and fierce,

and liable to the berserker rages of his breed, few rulers have combined in a degree so remarkable far vision, inflexible will, and power of patient statesmanship. He started in life with every disadvantage as the bastard son of Duke Robert I., known as the Devil. But in the end the poor Devil was sorry for his sins and went off on pilgrimage to the Holy Land, to die, some say by poison, far away at Nicea. In 1035 a bastard child eight years of age succeeded to his title. Pretty Arlette, the tanner's daughter of Falaise, when washing clothes in a brook near her home, had attracted the attention of Duke Robert. This Norman Nausicaa became the mother of William the Conqueror, and in default of lawful issue the duke made her son his heir.

It is one of the miracles of history that the boy, handicapped by irregular birth and beset as he was by plots and stratagems, should have survived the perils of his childhood. The duchy was in a state of uproar and rebellion throughout his youth. Duke Robert had chosen faithful guardians for his son, but no less than three of them were murdered. The child was destined, however, to win through the trials of his early days, and soon gave proof of his mettle. The Battle of Val les Dunes (1047) scattered the Norman rebels and left him as a youth of twenty master of his duchy. During the next twenty years William proved himself at every point a great ruler. Robbers and pirates were put down with an iron hand. Traders and peasants were protected, learning was made welcome in the persons of Lanfranc and Anselm; splendid churches were built and existing ones enlarged. William's later destiny in England lies beyond these pages, but his marriage with Matilda of Flanders had important reactions on church building in Normandy. J. R. Green has said of the Conqueror that his life was the long mastering of difficulty after difficulty. His marriage was no exception to this rule. The course of true love certainly did not run smoothly between himself and Matilda. The grim duke seems to have loved her with all the force and tenacity of his nature, but the lady's affections were for a long time set on a Saxon nobleman, who in turn was indifferent to

her. Consanguinity and bastard birth were obstacles in William's path, but for seven years he persisted in his wooing till Matilda's resistance was worn down (1057). There is a strange legend, probably apocryphal, as to the duke's method of bringing matters to a head. He waylaid his lady one day in the streets of Bruges as she returned from Mass, rolled her in the mud, and gave her a sound beating. After this the wedding day was fixed without more ado, and Matilda does not seem to have repented of her bargain. The pope, however, made difficulties about the marriage owing to the near relationship of the couple, difficulties which to William's fury were upheld by Lanfranc, then Prior of Bec. Lanfranc's courage and good humour carried duke and priest alike through a crisis in their relationship, and in the end all was well. It was Lanfranc who ultimately journeyed to Rome to secure the necessary dispensations. And the price paid in expiation of whatever sin the duke and duchess had committed was the building at Caen, then the residence of the Norman court, of two magnificent churches—The Trinité, founded by Matilda, known as the Abbaye aux Dames, and St. Étienne, founded by William, known as the Abbaye aux Hommes.

I have not loaded this chapter with long historical details of the close ties that existed between England and Normandy long before the Conquest. Suffice it here to say that complicated family relationships existed between the dukes of Normandy, the kings of England, and the descendants of Harold Bluetooth, King of Denmark. At Poitiers we have already met Emma, a Norman princess, daughter of Richard the Fearless, who was the wife of two English kings (Ethelred the Unready and Canute) and the mother of a third (Edward the Confessor). If the family relationships were intricate, the family feuds were no less fierce. Emma, wife and mother of kings, had apparently the knack of irritating all her male relations in turn—even the saintly Confessor turned on her. But in view of these close ties, it is easy to grasp the intellectual bridgehead afforded by Normandy for architecture as for other matters to England. Eleventh-century architecture in England had its own Saxon imprint, but after the Con-

[*Archives Photographiques, Paris.*

CAEN : LA TRINITÉ (ABBAYE AUX DAMES).

[P. 446

quest and the presence of great Norman ecclesiastics, such as Lanfranc and Anselm at Canterbury, the close relationship between the Romanesque churches of the twelfth century in Normandy and the Romanesque churches of the same period in England is easy to grasp.

The position of Normandy in the Gothic transition follows rather different lines from those of Île de France and the north-east. The Norman school of Romanesque produced superb buildings both in England and France. Few of the later Gothic cathedrals exceeded the Norman churches of the Romanesque period in size. Further, it was a school marked by great precocity. Spacious and well-proportioned, the Norman churches, though less rich in sculpture than those of the south, are built with great structural skill. "Les artistes très avisés," writes Monsieur Enlart, "n'ont voulu aborder que des programmes qu'ils fussent certains de bien remplir, tout chez eux est fermement voulu et nettement obtenu: leurs édifices sont vastes, clairs, simples, harmonieux, puissants et solides."

At one point only did the Norman builders fail, and it was a point that flung them into the arms of Île de France when the Gothic development took place. Fine architects though they were in every other respect, the Normans were extraordinarily timid in the use of the vault. Their great churches were generally roofed with wood. Vaults only found a place, and that with some hesitation, in the side aisles. To use a wooden roof was to avoid, not to solve the problem, but, freed from this preoccupation, the Normans were able to build lofty and well-lighted churches of ample proportions. The wooden roof, however, brought its own troubles. The danger of fire was ever present, and numerous churches were burnt to the ground. Naturally, the Norman builders were on the lookout for some better solution of the difficulty, and were experimenting with ogival ribs at an earlier date even than Île de France. It is difficult to know how much two adjoining provinces gave and took one from another, but if we cannot judge between claims of priority in the experimental stage, the dominant part played by Île de France in working out the new principles is incontestable. The Normans were

not backward in profiting by the enlarged experience of their neighbours in a field they had themselves explored. As in the Royal Domain, many Romanesque churches in Normandy were rebuilt with ogival vaulting, and the exquisite proportions of such a cathedral as Lisieux—one of the finest examples of early French Gothic—show what skill and ardour the Normans brought to the new architectural developments. A complete change of spirit swept over the Norman genius at this period. The Gothic cathedrals in Normandy are as airy and as elaborate as the Romanesque churches of an earlier date are simple and austere. The school that in the Romanesque period was the most backward in sculpture ends by treating stone as though it were gossamer. To begin with Jumièges, and to end with St. Maclou at Rouen, is to box every point of the architectural compass.

Romanesque churches of the Norman School have a marked individuality of their own. The general plan is that of a very long nave with vaulted side aisles and a choir of two bays with side aisles that continue the line of the nave. This plan, of course, makes for a fine perspective. A square east end is usually broken by one or three parallel apsidioles in line with the nave and side aisles. There is no ambulatory in the sense of the side aisles of the choir being carried round the apse, but the sanctuary is often enclosed by a line of single columns. The transept is broad and well defined, and generally carries an apsidiole on each arm. Sometimes the transept has a gallery at each end, with groined vaults supported on three sides by the wall, and on the fourth by a single column. We find these galleries or tribunes at St. Georges de Boscherville and St. Étienne de Caen, and the same feature is reproduced at Winchester and Canterbury. Radiating chapels are rare in Normandy, though they exist in some Norman churches in England where Benedictine influence was strong. William the Conqueror proved a munificent benefactor to the ecclesiastical establishments of his new kingdom, and, thanks to his lavish endowments, Norman architecture in England attained dimensions of size and splendour surpassing the scale of the abbeys in his native

duchy. The Normans were audacious builders of towers. A lantern tower is common over the transept crossing, but here and there—Jumièges and St. Étienne de Caen are outstanding examples—they flanked the severe façades of the west fronts by twin towers of colossal height that literally soar up into heaven.

Was it by an intelligent anticipation of events that, roofing their churches in wood, they yet constructed pillars and arches of a type that made the subsequent addition of ogival vaulting a matter of great simplicity? The lofty Norman naves, with their round arches and robust supports, are singularly impressive. Sometimes heavy pillars alternate with single columns, an arrangement that has a very happy effect, though its use has puzzled many archæologists. Possibly the pillars were constructed to carry transversal arches, or served some other purpose that the disappearance of the original roofs renders obscure. Nearly always there is a large triforium as well as a clerestory. The school is not remarkable for sculpture, and historiated capitals are at once very rare and very rude. The massive arches rest mainly on cushion capitals or on godroon capitals, though foliage is sometimes introduced in a primitive fashion. Decoration is mainly confined to geometrical designs—billets, nail heads, dog tooth, zigzags, etc. Blind arcades and interior galleries are common and are very effective in breaking up the height and bareness of the wall surface. It is not necessary in an English book to insist on the quality and fineness that these simple expedients give to the Norman School of Romanesque architecture. We have, happily, splendid examples under our own eyes and in our own land.

Normandy has two great architectural centres, Rouen and Caen. Rouen, save for the noble north tower of the cathedral, has preserved nothing from the Romanesque period, and the fantasies of the later Gothic reign there supreme. After the monotonous repetitions of the fourteenth century, personally I like the later phase when Gothic gets tired of being prim and respectable, breaks loose, and, throwing its cap over the mill, goes out with a jaunty air on a life of adventure. But Caen, happily, has preserved more or less

intact the two great abbeys founded by William and Matilda. For the influence that helped to form the Norman School, however, we must look to places of an earlier date. Nothing remains, alas! of the great abbey of Bec, founded in 1034, which in Lanfranc and in Anselm gave to Canterbury two archbishops of rare wisdom and learning. Fécamp, another great ecclesiastical centre, founded in 990 by Richard I., Duke of Normandy, has also perished entirely. But a neglected and desecrated church of this early period still survives in Bernay—a building of great importance that was the prototype apparently of many later Norman abbeys.

Bernay was founded during the earlier years of the eleventh century by Judith, wife of Richard II., Duke of Normandy. The duchess, of whom an old chronicle writes that she was as beautiful in mind as in body, was married to the duke in the year 1000. She must have lived, therefore, through all the agitations and alarms of the fatal year that was supposed to mark the end of the world. Possibly the experience left its mark on a character naturally pious, though the preoccupations of a happy marriage had replaced those concerned with the Last Judgment. Another powerful influence had entered her life in the person of our old friend William of Volpiano, who, in response to an earnest appeal from the duke, had left Dijon to take charge of the monastery of Fécamp, where he died in 1031. We saw in Chapter VI. the influence wielded by this famous Churchman in Burgundy. No less great was his authority in Normandy. Fécamp, under William of Volpiano, became a centre of architectural as well as of ecclesiastical influence. Though William, true to the Benedictine spirit, seems to have made no attempt to impose ready-made Burgundian models on the Normans, it is reasonable to conclude that some Lombard influence must have entered the north with an abbot who had brought Lombard workmen from Italy to Dijon. Monsieur le Chanoine Porée in an article on Bernay* states that an eleventh-century text at Fécamp tells of the travels of workers employed both in Normandy and Burgundy.

* Congrès Archéologique, 1908, p. 588.

Certainly the blind arcades and galleries that decorate many Norman towers recall the "bands" that were a marked feature of Lombard Romanesque. The test of a great mind is not what it seeks to impose but what it calls forth in the way of natural genius. And so we need not look in Normandy for any slavish imitation of the rotunda of St. Bénigne, but rather for a general stimulation of local talent due to the presence of a creative mind in the person of Abbot William.

In the pious and beautiful duchess, William of Volpiano found an enthusiastic collaborator. Under his guidance Judith founded and endowed the monastery of Bernay. She died in 1017, before the work was completed, but the duke, who was deeply attached to his wife, heaped benefactions on the church out of respect to her memory.

Bernay lies on the road between Rouen and Caen, and can be visited with great ease. The little town is a pleasant enough place, but it is certainly not to the credit of French archæology that an ancient building of such historic importance should be allowed to remain in its present condition of base decay and ruin. Like many churches, it fell on evil days, and was used at one time as a granary. Its condition at the time of my visit was that of a lumber-room combined with a meeting-place. A platform had been built across what was once the choir, and a choral society met there sometimes, so I was told by the depressed-looking woman who provided the key. Much of the church has been irrevocably ruined, but if the lumber were cleared away and aisle and transepts restored to their natural form, a very precious monument would re-emerge.

Bernay had originally a nave with seven bays, five of which are still intact. One side aisle has disappeared entirely, but the whole plan of the church can be reconstructed from what remains, and its main lines are clear. The side aisles of the choir had groined vaults, and, what is more rare, cupolas covered the side aisles of the nave. The heavy pillars of the nave have capitals touched up in the seventeenth century, and angels' heads appear in incongruous company with primitive Norman designs.

But some original foliage and animal carving can still be seen, and rude though the work it is curious and suggestive to find the old Persian theme of affronted animals on each side of the tree of life, with stylised plants and fruits, re-asserting itself in the north of Europe.

The broad transept at Bernay has or had an apsidiole on each arm, and there was a lantern tower over the crossing. The choir was a prolongation of the line of the nave, and consisted of two bays. Three apsidioles corresponding to the nave and side aisles formed the east end.

Reconstruct this plan, and here you have the prototype of the typical Normandy church. Hence the importance of Bernay, which Chanoine Porée takes as the prototype, among others, of La Trinité, St. Étienne, and St. Nicholas of Caen, of Cérisey la Forêt, of St. Georges de Boscherville, and of several churches in England.

Jumièges is a little later in date than Bernay. This most noble ruin on the banks of the Seine, some miles below Rouen, is even in decay a superb example of Romanesque architecture. When intact it must, I think, have been the greatest church in Normandy. Reconstructed between 1040 and 1067, the abbey stood on a very ancient foundation that goes back as far as St. Philibert and the year 655. The saint, indifferent to sanitary considerations, chose for his abbey a site on a pestilential marsh infested with snakes and called in consequence La Terre Gémétique. From this ill-sounding title was derived, after various modifications, the present name of Jumièges. The snakes have long since disappeared, and the marsh has yielded place to woods and cultivated fields. But the twin towers of Jumièges still raise their heads proudly from the green woods and meadows that border the Seine as it flows seaward—a broad and beautiful stream.

I was struck with the general air of resemblance between Jumièges and the much later foundation of Fountains Abbey. The *gardien* to whom I put the question told me he was quite familiar with a comment often made by English visitors. Fountains has not the same lofty towers at the west end as Jumièges, but each ruined and vaultless nave

makes much the same impression, though at Jumièges columns alternate with piers. Both abbeys had their choirs reconstructed in the Gothic style, though only a fragment of the later work remains in either place. Perhaps it is the beautiful and rather similar setting in the park of a country house that lends to both buildings so much grace and dignity in their old age.

It is unfortunately rare in France for an ancient monument to fall into hands that are either pious or appreciative. Jumièges has had a happier fate. The lady who owns the property in which the abbey stands is blessed with both knowledge and public spirit. Park and ruins, therefore, are kept in admirable order. What must the grandeur of this church not have been before it was sacked by the vandals of the Revolution and allowed to fall into decay? The west end, though but a shell, is more or less intact. The splendid towers, 55 metres high, one ending in a circular, the other in an octagonal stage, flank a gable end that opens over a plain Norman façade, broken only by doors and windows. Heavy piers alternate with columns and support the eight round arches that form the bays of the nave. There is some attempt at carving on the capitals, but we must not look for sculpture here. Above is a deep triforium gallery, and above that again a clerestory. The vitality, the spring, the splendid proportions of the church make an unforgettable impression. Only a few traces remain of the Gothic choir built in the thirteenth century, with its nine radiating chapels. One wall of a central tower that measured 13 metres 50 on each side is left to make us marvel at the courage and skill of the men who built it. The roof has long since disappeared, trees and foliage have invaded the nave, but the hall-mark of greatness survives on ruined arch and shattered column, and enables Jumièges in its romantic setting still to hold a place of pre-eminence among the churches of France.

As at Fountains, crumbling heaps of stone indicate the site of monastic buildings that existed on a large scale. On the south side of the abbey a small church dedicated to St. Peter was rebuilt during the fourteenth century on a Carolingian site. The porter's lodge is now a museum,

where some wreckage from the abbey has been assembled. Two recumbent statues recall the famous legend of the Énervés of Jumièges.

Jumièges was endowed by Clovis II. and his wife Bathilde, a couple of whom a ferocious tale is told. Shortly after the abbey was founded St. Philibert was called upon to perform an act of mercy to the unfortunate sons of the king, who, as a punishment for an act of rebellion against their father, had the muscles of their arms and legs cut by order of their mother, and were then turned adrift in a boat on the Seine. The boat was found stranded on the river-bank below Jumièges, and the abbot rescued the poor victims, nursed them back to health, and turned them into monks. The two effigies in the museum belong to the thirteenth century, and have nothing to do with the sons of Clovis, but popular fancy fastened on them as a record of this grim legend.

Jumièges had other celebrated visitors. Charles VII. and Agnes Sorel often lived at the abbey, and during the fifteenth century the chapter house was turned into a *salle des gardes* to provide accommodation for the retinue of the monarch and his lady. History has few records of a king's mistress who was at the same time gentle and beloved, but Agnes Sorel filled, and filled successfully, the double rôle. She died at Jumièges, and her heart was buried in the Lady Chapel under a slab of black marble inscribed with the words—

> Ici repose dans la tombe
> Une douce et simple colombe.

Paganism died hard north of the Loire, and the curious festival of "Le Loup Vert," held on the eve of St. John at Jumièges, when a man dressed up like a wolf headed a procession to the abbey, and youths and maidens lighted bonfires and sang songs, shows the persistence of heathen customs long centuries after the official disappearance of the old gods.

A church on the road between Rouen and Jumièges illustrates the danger of any hasty generalisation about the

[*Photo. Edit. Monuments Historiques.*

JUMIEGÈS.

[P. 454

Romanesque period. We say, and say with truth, that sculpture is weaker in Normandy than in any other school, but at St. Georges de Boscherville there is a chapter house that proves a startling exception to this rule. The church is a fine building of the early twelfth century, to which, like most Norman churches, ogival vaults were added at a later date. Unfortunately a magnificent interior has been ruined by a deplorable restoration. Columns, arches, and walls have disappeared under an obliterating coat of plaster decorated with lines to represent stone. This spacious and lofty church has both triforium and clerestory, and an interesting example of the tribune or gallery at each end of the transept. The removal of the plaster would be a righteous act on the part of some millionaire. A fine doorway at the west end has five archivolts covered with geometrical designs familiar to us all in Norman work. But the chapter house, built between 1157 and 1211, is, to the best of my knowledge, unique in Normandy, and is quite un-Norman in character and execution. The portal consists of three round arches and archivolts, splendidly carved with a formal design. These rest on historiated capitals, and the capitals in turn are supported by pillars to whose shafts long figures are attached. Figures and historiated capitals alike are shockingly mutilated, but luckily three capitals from the portal are preserved in the Museum at Rouen and are in good condition. These include remarkable scenes from Herod's feast (with a dancer performing on her head): Elders of the Apocalypse with musical instruments, a seated figure between lions, an Annunciation and a lovely Visitation. I have never seen two figures more entirely elegant and beautiful than those of the Elizabeth and Mary, who, in long jewelled robes, embrace each other with so tender a gesture. Here we have the work of a hand that has nothing in common with the geometrical designs of ordinary Norman sculpture. These capitals are works of art of the highest quality. The figures, delicately carved with their crowns and embroidered robes, at once reminded me of the Daurade capitals at Toulouse. The impression of imported influence is overwhelming. You have only to glance at the rough attempts at figure-

carving here and there in the nave of the church to realise the gulf that lies between the chapter house and the main building.

How is this anomaly to be explained? Suger, it is thought, brought sculptors from Languedoc to work at St. Denis. The chapter house at St. Georges de Boscherville is substantially later in date than either St. Denis or the west door of Chartres, but the work was carried on apparently over a long term of years. The Gothic period, as we saw, renounced the historiated capital and concentrated on monumental sculpture. St. Denis was the starting-point of the new conception, and Suger is credited with the first idea of attaching statues to the shafts of columns. I am bold enough to hazard my own hypothesis that sculptors worked at the chapter house of St. Georges de Boscherville who had been in touch, direct or indirect, with the *ateliers* of Languedoc on the one hand, and on the other were in touch no less close with the new developments in Île de France.

CHAPTER XXXV

CAEN AND BAYEUX

At Caen we find the Norman Romanesque at the height of its development. Caen stands on a long hillock in the midst of a green plain, and from end to end the ridge seems crowded with spires and towers. Every style of architecture is represented here—there are so many churches that several of them have fallen into disrepair or been converted to ignoble uses. Caen is not a mediæval town confined within walls, but spreads itself out on its hillock in spacious fashion and overflows into the plain. At one end of the ridge the mighty towers of William the Conqueror's church, St. Étienne—the Abbaye aux Hommes—keep watch over the town. At the opposite end, about a mile away, the square towers of Matilda's church, La Trinité—the Abbaye aux Dames—fulfil a guardianship no less faithful. All Caen seems to lie between these two churches, though the beautiful spire of St. Pierre raises a bold head in the centre of the town—as much as to say that a late Gothic church with a Renaissance apse does not mean to be snubbed even in the city of William and Matilda.

William's abbey is one of the largest churches in France —vast, simple, severe. But the appearance it presents today must be very different from the building as originally planned. Lanfranc, the Lombard, who was a great maker of churches at Bec, at Caen, and subsequently at Canterbury, came to Caen in 1063 to take charge of the work. St. Étienne was consecrated in 1077, eleven years after the Conquest, by which date Lanfranc had become Archbishop of Canterbury. The sexpartite vaults of the nave were added during the twelfth century; the choir was rebuilt in the thirteenth, and the Gothic spires added to the Romanesque towers about the same date. It is there-

fore more a church of the Gothic transition than one of the Romanesque period. The nave has eight bays and presents the curious feature of a stronger and weaker pier, which suggests an anticipation (obviously impossible) by the Romanesque architects of the future needs of Gothic vaulting. To archæologists St. Étienne presents many puzzling features, and though the proportions are very impressive, the interior is rather frigid. The painstaking hand of the restorer has also done its work. The disappearance of the historiated capital, and the monotonous crockets that take its place, rob the nave of a Romanesque church at a stroke of half its interest. From the outside it is difficult to get a good view of St. Étienne, as it is penned in by houses and buildings on every side. The west end has the stark simplicity of the typical Norman church. Two huge towers flank a square wall end crowned by a gable. Four heavy buttresses, two lines of windows, and three doorways alone do something to break up the massive appearance of the façades. The towers are more elaborate. Lombard bands, blind arcades, and open arcades are skilfully arranged in stages so as to form three divisions. Here the Romanesque builders brought their work to an end, and it was left to a later Gothic architect to raise the spires and turrets that now shoot up into the air. The *chevet*, with its Gothic choir and flying buttresses, is very fine, but it is not easy, owing to the intercepting houses, to get a clear view of it.

William the Conqueror was buried here in 1087, but it is a melancholy story to tell the tale of the vicissitudes that overtook dust once so puissant. His funeral was marked by a scandalous incident. During the service a scene was made by a citizen of Caen named Ascelin, who claimed an ancient right known as "la clameur de haro," and declared that the site of the church had been taken from him by the Conqueror without due payment. A sum of money, hastily collected from the nobles present, settled the clamour of Ascelin, and the funeral proceeded. It was then found that the grave was too small for the coffin, and the company had to disperse before the final burial took place. William was not allowed to rest in peace in the church he

had built. On two occasions his tomb was moved by the abbot and canons at St. Étienne, who found its presence inconvenient for their services. In the sixteenth century the grave was desecrated by the Huguenots, and again at the time of the French Revolution, when William's remains were finally scattered to the winds. A marble slab in front of the High Altar marks the site of the original grave, and at a solemn service held during the millenary celebrations in 1927 the Mayor of Hastings laid a wreath on the Conqueror's tomb while the organ softly played " God save the King." Thus nine hundred years of conflict and of friendship, of losses and of gains, found fitting expression by the empty tomb in a French church of one of the greatest of England's kings.

The Abbaye aux Dames seems to me in every way a finer and more satisfactory church than the Abbaye aux Hommes, primarily because it is marked by far greater unity of plan. Sexpartite vaulting was added at a later date, and a Gothic chapel found its way into the south arm of the transept. Otherwise the church remains much as Matilda knew it. La Trinité was begun about 1059, a few years before St. Étienne. The name of the architect is not known with any certainty, but it is thought that Gondulf, one of Lanfranc's monks, who subsequently became Bishop of Rochester and built the cathedral there, may have designed Matilda's church when at Caen. The nave has seven bays, a triforium with blind arcades, and a lofty clerestory. Round arches decorated with a handsome geometrical band are carried by the piers of the nave. These have two engaged columns with carved capitals, one facing east and one west, and a third column rises to the level of the clerestory, where it carries the reinforcing arch of the sexpartite vault. The side aisles are covered with groined vaults. Though the capitals of the nave are rude, almost childish by comparison with the accomplished work to be found in Burgundy, Saintonge, and the south of France, there is more variety of design and more imagination shown at La Trinité than elsewhere. What looks like the Gothic crocket appears to be in process of evolution from a sort of monster's head or a bird of prey with bulging

eyes. One capital is decorated rather barbarously with foliage and horses' heads. The general appearance of the church is greatly damaged by the altar being placed at the transept crossing, thus cutting off a full view of the very beautiful choir built over a fine crypt. There is an apsidiole chapel on the arm of each transept, and two shallow apsidioles close the side aisles of the choir. The church ends in a large apse of unusual construction. The crypt, resting on thirty-six columns, has some interesting capitals. Matilda was buried in the choir of La Trinité after her death in 1083, and, more fortunate than her husband, her bones, though disturbed, have not been scattered. The Protestants destroyed her tomb at the moment when they carried out the same pious office for William at St. Étienne. But the Abbess of La Trinité, more alert than the Abbot of St. Étienne, was able to prevent the final outrage. The dust of the founder was preserved both then and subsequently at the Revolution, when another effort was made to desecrate the grave. The present marble tomb was made early in the nineteenth century and has a happy simplicity well suited to its severe surroundings.

Like St. Étienne, the façade of La Trinité consists of two towers flanking the west end. But they carry no spires and are more richly decorated than the towers of William's church. The main entrance is deeply recessed and has archivolts covered with geometrical designs. A modern tympanum, unfortunately, has been added. The side doors are situated in the base of the towers, and above are four tiers of blind arches, galleries, and columns, each tier more elaborately decorated than the one below it. There is a fine lantern tower over the crossing. The exterior appearance of La Trinité is very beautiful and can be seen to great advantage from the open space on which the church stands. Matilda's abbey became a famous convent, and the nuns included some of the most aristocratic women in France. The second abbess, Cecilia, was a daughter of William and Matilda, and other royal ladies held the office at subsequent dates. La Trinité, like St. Étienne, was very handsomely endowed, and the abbey and its dependencies covered a large extent of ground. The

buildings reconstructed in the eighteenth century now serve another purpose. It sounds at first hearing rather attractive to be told that destitute old people are now housed within the abbey walls and have the benefit of the beautiful park and grounds. But further enquiry seemed to reveal nothing more attractive than the doubtful joys of an unclassified mixed workhouse, where several hundred men, women, and children of all ages and conditions were herded in separate pens under a strict discipline. It is easy to understand why love of architecture drove John Ruskin into the path of what is called social reform. For scandalous though his trumpet blast sounded in mid-Victorian ears, he forced a material and complacent age to face an unpalatable truth—that there is an abiding relationship between great art and great living, and that the degradation of the workman involves the loss of truth and beauty in all higher values of existence.

Before bringing this chapter to an end I must say a few words about Bayeux. The present thirteenth-century cathedral replaced two Romanesque churches, one of the eleventh and one of the twelfth century, both destroyed by fire. Of the earlier period nothing remains but the fine Romanesque crypt, the Romanesque arcades of the naves, and some portions of the towers that stand at the west end. The nave is one of the most remarkable in France, with the magnificent geometrical decoration of the arcades, the fine diaper work of the walls, and the surprising bas reliefs of figures, chimeras, interlaced monsters fixed in the spandrels of the arches. Some of these objects are clearly inspired by Oriental designs. Monsieur de Lasteyrie and Monsieur Michel both find in one bas relief of two entwined monsters an echo of some Chinese model, transmitted possibly through a Sassanian medium. One of the most curious bas reliefs of the series shows a man playing with a monkey. I need not repeat here what I have said before as to the strange origin of many designs that found their way into Romanesque sculpture from an Oriental source, but the nave at Bayeux is very suggestive on this particular point. Apart from the interest of the

nave, Bayeux Cathedral is a noble example of early Gothic architecture, and from the flight of steps at the west entrance that leads down to the nave the fine proportions of the cathedral can be seen at a glance. A very beautiful door with early Gothic foliage carving should be noticed at the north-west end of the nave.

No visitor should fail to see the Treasure, where there is a fine Arab coffer in ivory, with Cufic inscriptions, and a beautiful early silk textile, known as the chasuble of St. Regnobert. Last, but not least, in what was formerly the bishop's palace, now a museum, the Bayeux tapestry is exhibited to the best advantage in airtight glass cases.

We all have visions, I suppose, of good Queen Matilda stitching away at her famous piece of work. There are only three objections to so pleasing a picture: the tapestry is not tapestry at all but embroidery; it had nothing to do with Queen Matilda, whose needle never touched it, and it was made in all probability not at Bayeux but by Anglo-Saxon workmen in Kent. Odo, Bishop of Bayeux, the Conqueror's brother, was present at the Battle of Hastings, and subsequently was given the county of Kent in recognition of his services. Now the art of embroidery flourished in Kent, and though there is no definite proof that the so-called tapestry was made for Odo, the balance of probability leans in that direction. All that can be claimed with certainty is that the workmanship is Anglo-Saxon.

But whatever its origin, the Bayeux tapestry—like Gothic architecture, the term, however incorrect, is too well established to be altered now—is a splendid affair, a true *chanson de geste* in embroidery. It consists of a roll of coarse linen, 70 metres long and 50 centimetres broad, which sets out in wool work the story of Harold's relations with William the Conqueror. The narrative occupies no less than fifty-eight scenes—all incredibly vigorous and amusing. No picture and no reproduction that I have ever seen gives the least idea of the quality of the original. The tapestry is a marvellous record of contemporary civil and military life. Norman and Anglo-Saxon details, costumes, and architecture are treated with the utmost fidelity. The embroidery is alive from one end to the other,

and no less attractive is the border with stories of fabulous animals that frames the main narrative. As for the Battle of Hastings, it is a real epic in wool work. Almost you can hear the horses charging and the shouts of the men in armour. Some of the scenes are full of humour. Women appear very seldom in the story, but there is a quaint episode of a lady having her ears boxed to make her remember that she is betrothed to Harold. In another scene a protesting woman and child are being ejected from a house that has been set on fire for military reasons. War in every age seems to repeat the same sort of dismal tragedy. Truly comic is the scene of two soothsayers scanning the heavens on Harold's behalf, but finding very little to comfort them in the prospect.

The long scroll of embroidery on which the epic is worked is in very good condition. As for the colours, the splendid reds, blues, and greens have stood up bravely to the test of nearly a thousand years, and are to all intents and purposes as good as ever. The fadeless fabrics so called of our own time might well hide their washed-out anæmic countenances for very shame at such steadfastness. It is only fair to add that the work has been frequently restored, but the inevitable repairs have been skilfully made without any obvious damage to the quality of the whole.

It is amusing to find that the famous embroidery was carried off by Napoleon to Paris in 1804 to serve as a sort of totem for the army, and to show his troops that there was a good precedent for the conquest of England. Luckily it found its way back to the town whose name it bears. The Bayeux tapestry in its gaiety and vigour is one of the great art treasures of Europe, and here, as in a mirror, we find the manners and customs of our forefathers reproduced with a realism that makes them live for us again.

CHAPTER XXXVI

ST. DENIS

With Île de France we come to the end of our story. But, as I have already explained, the end is only a new beginning. Romanesque architecture was never to know any dreary moment of decay. In the fulness of its powers it passes, in Ariel's words, into something rich and strange. Nothing fades, but everything alters. The districts of France under the influence of the Royal Domain undergo a transformation so rapid, and show an enthusiasm so great for the new architectural forms, that the transition necessarily passes beyond the limits of this book. To trace in detail the story of the countless beautiful churches that mark the advent of Gothic is a study that calls for separate treatment. I propose, therefore, to devote these final chapters to some account of St. Denis—Suger's celebrated church that admittedly exercised so vast an influence on the development of Gothic architecture; and then, before the west door of Chartres, to try and gather up the many scattered threads of our long wanderings through the provinces of France.

No ancient building finds itself more sadly marooned today than the royal basilica of the kings of France. St. Denis is easily reached by tramway from the Gare du Nord in Paris, but the way lies through a series of industrial suburbs, squalid and depressing in the extreme. Is it with a touch of ironic humour that the Parisians have rechristened a long, dreary *faubourg* on the line of route Avenue President Wilson ? St. Denis is today an important industrial centre, crowded with engineering and chemical works. Let us hope that they earn large dividends for their shareholders, but it is a poor setting for the last resting-place of the French kings. In spite of its melancholy surroundings, the basilica still bears itself bravely

among the third-rate shops and poor dwellings of the locality, and within its doors the squalor without is forgotten in the beauty of the interior.

The basilica stands on a very ancient foundation that goes back to the days of Dagobert: 625. He destined his church to be the burying-place of the kings of France, and through the chances and changes of many centuries it served that purpose until the French Revolution. Though the abbey was rebuilt several times, Suger, when appointed Abbot of St. Denis in 1122, found it inconveniently small —" the women ran over the head of the men when getting to the altar"—thus plaintively he describes the scene at Mass. He at once set about the construction of a new church on a more adequate scale, and summoned the best craftsmen of the day—architects, sculptors, glass workers—to assist in the task. The construction of the king's basilica by the king's most trusted counsellor and regent was an event of first-rate importance and drew all eyes to St. Denis. The consecration in 1144, in the presence of the king, the queen, and a large assembly of French notables was felt to mark an epoch both in architecture and history. Suger himself was one of the simplest of men and shared all the austerities of the monastic life. But from his humble cell he directed work " great and exceedingly magnificent " for the adornment of the house of God.

Much of this magnificence has perished. Needless to say, the tombs of the kings caught the full blast of the devilry that turned Paris into a shambles during the Terror. The basilica was wrecked, monuments destroyed, and the royal dust scattered. The basilica which, like many others, had been turned into a granary was restored and reconsecrated by Napoleon I., and the tombs repaired and made good. For the student of Romanesque the interest of St. Denis lies not in the memorials of kings and queens but in the two ends of the basilica, the ambulatory and the porch that go back to the days of Suger's church consecrated in the year 1144. This was the church whose vaults and sculpture, in an untranslatable French phrase, " ont fait école," and led the way in the whole Gothic development. The crypt with its historiated

columns is also Romanesque, and goes back to Suger's time, but the rest of the church was rebuilt on fine lines between 1230 and 1281 by Pierre de Montereau. The nave suffers from modern stained glass windows of very poor quality, but some precious glass of Suger's period is preserved in the chapels of the ambulatory.

You are not allowed to wander at will at St. Denis. The tombs take up a portion of the nave and all the choir, and there you must not penetrate save in company of a guide, who frowns on loitering and pours out a monotonous stream of more or less accurate information about kings and queens, with no regard of any kind to what really matters in the church. No word at least caught my ear about Suger's ambulatory and the Gothic vaults that mark an epoch in building. So fine is the quality of columns, vaults, and capitals in the ambulatory, so little mark do they bear of experiment or immaturity, that it is hardly credible that such work was produced as early as 1144. In the ambulatory the ogival ribs and reinforcing arches fall on elegant columns with Gothic capitals. Foliage and crockets have completely ousted the historiated capitals that survive in the crypt. The round arch exists, but the pointed arch is coming rapidly to the fore, and is already giving proof of its organic relationship with the ogival vault. No less striking is the porch, happily preserved by Pierre de Montereau during his reconstruction in the thirteenth century. Here heavy ogival vaulting is carried on slender columns that already depart from the massive pillars of the earlier Romanesque buildings. The historiated capital is passing, but fine foliage capitals mixed with some animals are still found in the porch of St. Denis.

Suger's influence was as important for the future of sculpture as it was for the future of architecture. The joint excesses of revolutionaries and restoring architects at St. Denis have made havoc of the façade and of the sculptures that adorned the portal of the twelfth-century church. But archæologists during recent years have pieced together a good deal of information about the original portal, and closer study of the great portals in Burgundy and Languedoc has thrown much light on the problem. Mon-

sieur Mâle* is of opinion that in spite of restorations that have ruined its character the tympanum of the Last Judgment over the west door of St. Denis goes back to the time of Suger and must be regarded as his work. Little or nothing of the original sculpture of the tympanum remains, but the restorers when remaking the figures kept to the original plan, and the existing door jambs are of Suger's time. The point is of great importance, for, if it is granted, St. Denis forms a vital link in the chain that unites the great schools of sculpture in the south of France with the later developments of thirteenth-century art. There are manifest resemblances between the Last Judgment of St. Denis and the Last Judgment of Beaulieu described in Chapter XIV. In both tympana the central figure is a seated Christ with gigantic arms outstretched in blessing. Other identical features are a cross in the sky, seated Apostles gathered round the Lord, angels with large trumpets proclaiming the hour of judgment, the dead rising from their graves. Beaulieu, as we saw, was closely related to Moissac, so indirectly the School of Moissac would appear to have influenced the School of St. Denis.

In the similarities of style and iconography that can be traced, Monsieur Mâle finds the proof that Suger brought sculptors from Languedoc to work at his new basilica, and he holds the view that the *atelier* so formed, having finished its task at St. Denis, was then transferred to Chartres.

But Suger was no copyist. He brought men from the south to work in Île de France because they were the best craftsmen of their day. But they in turn had much to learn from his powerful and creative mind. The tympanum of the Last Judgment at St. Denis is or, rather, was a more accomplished piece of work than the Last Judgment at Beaulieu. The archivolts that are plain at Beaulieu are richly sculptured at St. Denis with angels, Elders of the Apocalypse, and other members of the great company who are to decorate in future the portals of the Gothic cathedrals. One further development of great importance must be noticed. It was at St. Denis for the first time

* "L'Art Religieux du 12ème Siècle," p. 177.

that statues representing the personages of the Old Law appear, attached to the columns flanking the portal. These statues have perished, but luckily drawings made by Montfauçon before their destruction are still in existence, and we can form some idea of their appearance. Clearly they are the prototypes of the splendid figures that are the glory of the west door of Chartres, figures that freed from their columns take their stand at the entrance of the later Gothic cathedrals. St. Denis, broken and fragmentary therefore though the evidence it presents, forms an essential page in the history of religious sculpture. It is in every sense of the word the mother church of Gothic art, and we owe to it and Suger an incalculable debt. But, thanks to the savage destruction that has taken place at St. Denis, there we can only see in part and know in part. It is to Chartres we must go to find ideas and principles on which Suger was the first to lay firm hold, set out in the full light of splendid accomplishment.

[*Archives Photographiques, Paris.*

CHARTRES : ROYAL PORTAL (STATUES).

CHAPTER XXXVII

THE ROYAL PORTAL OF CHARTRES

"Notre Dame de Chartres! It was a world to explore as if one explored the entire Middle Ages; it was also one unending elaborate religious function—a life or a continuous drama to take one's part in. Dependent on its structural completeness, on its wealth of well-preserved ornament, on its unity in variety, perhaps on some undefinable operation of genius, beyond but concurrent with all these, the church of Chartres has still the gift of a unique power of impressing."

All admirers of Walter Pater will remember that in "Gaston de Latour," the book left unfinished at his death, there is a beautiful chapter on Our Lady's Church at Chartres from which I have taken the above quotation. Though Pater writes with fine feeling of many sides of religious art, I have often the impression that he either ignored or failed to understand the more robust elements in both Romanesque and Gothic architecture—elements that are as real as the delicate values uppermost in his mind. The brief reference to the splendid sculptures of Chartres as "sad, patient images" suffering chiefly from cold is sufficiently surprising. But his description of the cathedral as a great ship for ever at sail in the distance must appeal to anyone who has approached Chartres by road across the far-flung cornlands of La Beauce. To see it as I saw it for the first time in the stormy sunset of a summer evening, when the harvest was being gathered in, two spires like twin points of perfect aspiration rising into Heaven, though no glimpse of the body of the church was visible; then little by little to see the great structure heave itself out of the plain and take growing form before being swallowed up by the night—this is perhaps the greatest of many unforgettable memories that I associate

with the name of Chartres. For to know and to love Chartres is to enter into one of man's great spiritual possessions; to be made free of a kingdom that becomes ever more regal as one adventures deeper within its borders. Each time I go back to Chartres the impression is more overwhelming than the last; each time some new miracle of beauty is revealed that makes me feel that on previous occasions my eyes were holden. Chartres stands on the same pinnacle of accomplishment in mediæval architecture that the Acropolis fills in classical art. And by some miracle for which our thankfulness can never be too great it has come down to us almost undamaged. Every building has to face the legitimate vicissitudes wrought by time and weather, but, as we have seen, it is to the malignity of man rather than to the processes of nature that the ruin of countless precious works of art has been due. Chartres did not escape entirely from troubles that overwhelmed other churches, but it escaped far more lightly. The Revolution had its fling here, but again in a modified form. The Treasure was sacked, and some damage done to the statues of the north door and other bas reliefs. But no systematic work of destruction was carried out, and the marvellous glass windows were spared. The greatest harm done to the cathedral in the nine hundred years of its existence must be laid at the door of our friends the villains—the eighteenth-century canons. They destroyed the beautiful early thirteenth-century *jubé*, whose shattered fragments are preserved in the crypt, covered the arcades and pillars of the choir with stucco and miserable bas reliefs, and crowned their work by the erection of a colossal marble retable behind the High Altar, representing the Assumption of the Virgin. It proves, I think, what quality is possessed by the building as a whole, that those excrescences hardly seem to matter. After a time you end by not noticing them.

This great cathedral forms a fitting epilogue to a book on Romanesque France. It stands at the exact point of juncture where two noble streams meet and mingle their waters. Here both Romanesque and Gothic can be seen at their best: Romanesque in the moment of supreme

accomplishment, Gothic in the moment of perfect aspiration. The cathedral is a volume on which the whole history of the transition is written. There is really nothing more that can be said or can be learnt beyond the record in stone preserved between the twelfth-century west door and the north and west portals added in the thirteenth century. Know Chartres thoroughly and you have in you the root of all that is best in the Romanesque and Gothic periods.

A voluminous literature exists about Chartres. Volumes have been devoted to its architecture, its sculpture, its glass. It is a very difficult place of which to write in moderate language or without too lavish a use of adjectives. I am not concerned to attempt any detailed description of the cathedral; a task quite beyond the compass of this chapter, and one that has been adequately carried out by many writers both French and English. But in concluding this study of Romanesque France, I wish to draw attention to certain aspects of mediæval sculpture and iconography that are summarised for us here.

The foundation of Chartres goes back to the dawn of Christianity in France. Though a legend of Druids who worshipped a Virgin Mother at Chartres rests on no evidence worthy of the name, the cathedral stands on a site hallowed by Pagan no less than by Christian worship. Beneath the crypt traces of a Gallo-Roman temple have come to light, and the famous well, visible again today, was probably put to ceremonial uses in Pagan times. This long continuity of religious worship under different forms lent special sanctity to Chartres. The present cathedral had many predecessors. Primitive churches built in the fourth and eighth centuries have disappeared without leaving any trace, and fire, an enemy that has dogged Chartres again and again in the course of its history, destroyed a more important building of the ninth century. The crypt, one of the largest in France, dates from the next church built by Bishop Fulbert during the eleventh century. This church suffered severely from a great fire that raged in 1134 and destroyed the larger part of the town. The citizens of Chartres remained undaunted by these calamities. Work

was immediately resumed on the north tower—then half built—and in 1145 the south tower with its splendid stone steeple and the narthex, now the west end of the cathedral, were added to the old eleventh-century church. In 1194 another fire completed the ruin of Fulbert's work, and the present Gothic cathedral in the form of a Latin cross was built between the years 1194 and 1220.

Immense popular enthusiasm went to the building of Chartres. The cathedral is in a very real sense a national monument raised by the labour and devotion of all classes of society. Kings, princes, and nobles gave of their best, but so too did all manner of humble folk—merchants, workmen, and artisans of the day. The famous glass windows testify to this day to the benefactions of the Guilds. Carpenters, weavers, shoemakers, bakers, butchers, drapers, money changers, blacksmiths, take an equal place as pious donors alongside St. Louis and his mother, the princes of the royal family, and the great territorial noblemen. Accounts have survived of the extraordinary zeal shown by the whole population in rebuilding the church after that disastrous fire in 1134. Men and women of the highest birth, we are told, harnessed themselves to carts laden with stone and wood, and dragged them to the gate of the church from the quarries seven miles distant at Berchères l'Évêque. The transport of the stone assumed the aspect of great ceremonial processions of penitence and prayer. Priests and acolytes headed the processions, and the vast blocks of stone were moved to the accompaniment of chants and hymns. It is not surprising that architect, sculptors, masons, workmen, caught fire from such enthusiasm, and that the building they raised bears every mark of inspiration. We are often told that popular enthusiasm is a vain thing; that all great work is the product of an élite. But Chartres seems to prove that a high level of popular faith can react even on genius and cause genius itself to flower in forms of surpassing beauty.

It was desired to raise the new cathedral on the foundations of Fulbert's crypt and to increase its length. It was also desired to preserve the towers and the new west entrance added in 1145 and left untouched by the fire of

1194. Happily, therefore, for future generations the Portail Royal or Royal Portal, as it is called, was taken down and remounted stone by stone in its present position. It now stands on a line with the towers, but originally stood further back and was flanked by them on each side—a better arrangement, so we cannot but feel, than the present one. For the porch in its recess flanked by the towers must have set off to very great advantage the sculptures of the doorways. Probably the architect regretted the change, but he had no choice in the matter.

The anxiety to build anew over Fulbert's crypt and to preserve the existing towers must have entailed a good many difficulties for him. He wished to enlarge the church, but found himself hampered by limitations not of his making. In consequence, as a glance at the ground plan shows, the nave, which has only six bays, is proportionately short for the depth of the transept and apse. The transept in fact has as many bays as the nave. As in the Norman churches, the line of the nave is continued in the choir, and the additional length thus provided serves to redeem what otherwise might have been felt as an error in perspective. This criticism, let me add, is more apparent on paper than in reality. Within the walls of the cathedral the sole impression is that of perfect harmony. The architecture is Gothic of the purest moment. Ogival vaults and reinforcing arches are carried on two alternating types of pier: one cylindrical with four octagonal columns, the other octagonal with four round columns. The triforium is a narrow gallery composed of small arches and columns. Above rises the spacious clerestory consisting in each bay of twin pointed windows surmounted by a circular window. So far as sculpture is concerned, the interior decoration of Chartres is very simple, consisting of foliage capitals of the crocket type and foliage keys in the vaults. It was for the portals that sculptors reserved their powers. Within doors another decorative scheme was planned. Sculpture and glass both reach a supreme level at Chartres, but with fine taste each is given its own sphere of influence—there is no distracting competition between rival values of excellence.

The art of stained glass was carried to a point of perfection at Chartres never subsequently surpassed. Over the Royal Portal are three incomparable windows of the twelfth century. The one in the centre sets out the principal events in the life of Christ, from the Annunciation onwards; to the left is a window with scenes from the Passion; to the right a superb tree of Jesse. How am I to find words to describe the dazzling colour of these windows—the blues, the yellows, the reds, that blaze like jewels on fire, especially the blues that seem captured straight out of heaven? Stained glass had nothing to learn from Gothic art. It is a perfect product of the Romanesque period, and had touched by the middle of the twelfth century a level never subsequently exceeded.

The three west windows at Chartres would make the fame of any church. But they are only the opening page of a great series. Stained glass windows, slightly later in date and hardly less splendid, fill the whole building. It is a marvellous ensemble of thirteenth-century glass. Europe has nothing to touch it. The vast popular enthusiasm that centred round the cathedral led men and women of all classes and degrees and professions to vie one with another not only in its construction but in its adornment. At each transept end, north and south, there is a splendid rose window, and a rose was added to the west end above the twelfth-century glass of the old narthex. The north rose is called the Rose of France, and was given by St. Louis and his mother, Blanche of Castile. It is dedicated to the Virgin, who sits in glory with the Child in her arms, surrounded by angels, kings, and prophets. In the window, as in the statues of the portal it surmounts, Mary is accompanied by witnesses from the Old Testament. Beneath the rose are five lancet windows, each holding a grandiose figure. In the centre light we see a colossal St. Anne, with a curious chocolate-coloured face, who sits holding the infant Mary on her knee. Round her stand the royal personages of the Old Law—David, Solomon, Aaron, Melchisedech. The rose and lancet windows of the south transept follow the same plan as those of the north, and are filled by glass no less splendid. As the south side of the

church symbolises the New Law, Christ sits in the centre of the rose surrounded by Elders and sacred beasts. In the central light of the five windows below we have the Virgin holding the Child in her arms. Very extraordinary are the figures in the lancets to her right and left. For Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, who accompany her, are carried each on the shoulders of a great prophet: St. Matthew on Isaiah, St. Luke on Jeremiah, St. John on Ezekiel, St. Mark on David. This window was the gift of Peter Mauclerc, Count of Dreux and Duke of Brittany, and portraits of himself and his family have a place, modest though it be, among the divine personages of the great assembly. When the doors of the south or north portal are open, and standing outside you look across the gloom of the church to these splendid windows ablaze with fire and colour in their sombre setting, the impression is quite overwhelming. On a fine day at Chartres you can watch window after window light up and blaze with colour as hour by hour the sun circles round the building, and, like some great magician, scatters jewels along his path. Especially beautiful in the evening light are the windows of the west front where the Last Judgment was added in the thirteenth century above the lancets of an earlier date.

Stained glass windows wind their way round aisle, choir, and apse, and fill the clerestory. It would require weeks of study to become familiar even with their main outline. A famous window in the south aisle of the choir is known as Notre Dame de la Belle Verrière. The Virgin in a gorgeous blue dress and wearing a jewelled crown sits with a purple Christ on her knees. She is surrounded by angels holding lights and blowing oliphants. In the clerestory no less than sixty-eight great figures of Apostles, prophets, and saints look down on the nave. The unhappy fire in 1836, when the timbers of the roof known as the " forest " were destroyed, did some damage to these windows, and made certain restorations inevitable. The figures are rather fierce-looking personages, but they were designed on a large scale to meet the requirements of a high level. Generally speaking, the windows at Chartres are made up of a series of small scenes not always easy to decipher.

Legends of the saints are introduced as well as Biblical characters. Some of the scenes are gay and homely. One window given by the masons is of special interest. We see them at work in the masons' yard, lay workers, not monks, wearing the dress of the period. Some of the men are busy with capitals and statues: one seems deep in thought, and one hearty fellow is draining a glass of wine. In the light thrown on dress, on customs, and on a host of iconographical points, the windows at Chartres, quite apart from their dazzling beauty, are a gold mine of information.

I should add that the eighteenth-century canons, when making their detestable alterations, went so far as to remove several stained glass windows from the choir on the pretext that they interfered with the light. An eighteenth-century architect, it may be remembered, worked similar and more complete havoc among the mediæval glass at Salisbury Cathedral. We can only be thankful that at Chartres the canons did not proceed even to worse outrages and that the bulk of the glass escaped their attentions.

Though the particulars of guilds and donors have been preserved, the name of the architect whose master mind we feel at every turn has been lost. We do not know who built the present cathedral, and silence equally profound rests over the sculptors who about the year 1144 designed the Royal Portal. Splendid portals were added during the thirteenth century to the north and south arms of the transept—the south portal between the years 1224 and 1250 and the north portal begun about 1230, but never wholly finished. We are no less ignorant about the sculptors, glass workers, and architects of the Gothic period.

These dates are of importance to any student of Chartres, for it will be seen at once that between the sculptures of the Royal Portal begun in 1145 and those of the lateral portals nearly a hundred years of development has taken place. The west front is still Romanesque; the north and south portals are Gothic. All are superb examples of their kind and are documents in stone of the utmost value in the history of sculpture.

This is not the place for any lengthy description of the Gothic portals of the cathedral. They belong to a later and different page of art from that which ends in this chapter, and I can only touch briefly on some of their main features and the principles they illustrate. To write of Chartres and to ignore the north and south portals would be an ungracious and ill-mannered act. I digress, therefore, chronologically for a moment before we bring our pilgrimage to a close before the Romanesque sculptures of the west front.

The Gothic sculptors, as we have seen, both simplified and, so to speak, codified the voluminous iconography handed down to them by their predecessors. In a Romanesque church the subject-matter is arranged with little apparent order. On p. 141, I commented when writing of Vézelay on the haphazard way in which scenes from the Old and New Testament or lives of the saints are thrown together on the four sides of an historiated capital. But during the Gothic period this rich material is sorted out and arranged on a definite plan. Personages whom we have met as individuals now form part of a collective whole. Though there are many exceptions to the rule, an iconographical plan emerges of which Chartres is a perfect example.

Before the days of printing, when very few people could read or write, the cathedral itself was the Bible of the poor and the text of the priest. Religious truths that men learnt subsequently from books were taught at an earlier date through the medium of sculpture and glass.

The north side of a Gothic cathedral was held to symbolise the Old Testament, the south the New. On the north side, turned away from the sun, we find the kings, prophets, and heroes of the Old Law, the seekers after God on whom the light of the Gospel never shone. On the south side are Apostles, Evangelists, saints, and martyrs standing in the warmth of the New Law. The west end of the church, lit up by the rays of the setting sun—solemn emblem of our transitory life—was generally, as at St. Denis, reserved for the Last Judgment, more rarely as at Chartres for the representation of the risen and triumphant Lord sitting in

glory surrounded by the hierarchy of Heaven. Here we have the general plan carried out in detail at Chartres. The south portal consists of a flight of seventeen steps leading up to three doorways recessed in deep bays. Gothic art is seen here at its best. Some idea of the wealth of sculpture may be gathered from the fact that no less than 783 figures, large and small, appear on this great composition. Twenty-eight large statues of Apostles, saints, and martyrs are grouped to right and left of the doors. Above is a gallery with eighteen life-sized statues. The tympanum of the central door represents the Last Judgment, and the five archivolts are filled with choirs of angels and heavenly beings. The left door is devoted to the martyrs. On the tympanum is sculptured the tale of St. Stephen, and the statues surrounding the doors all represent famous martyrs. Those of St. Theodore and St. George in this group are specially fine. The right door is devoted to the Holy Confessors. The tympanum shows stories from the lives of St. Martin of Tours, and statues of popes, bishops, and saints are grouped round the entrance. On the *trumeau* of the central door stands the most impressive figure of this great ensemble—a noble statue of Christ the Teacher—the right hand raised in blessing, the left holding the book of life.

The north portal, to me the more beautiful of the two, is built on the same general plan as the south—a flight of steps leading up to three recessed doorways, bays and archivolts covered with sculpture and large statues grouped about the doors. This porch is dedicated to the Virgin and sets forth not only innumerable stories of her life and ancestry, but calls in the great personages of the Old Law to testify to her grace and glory and to serve as links between the Old Testament and the New. St. Anne, a beautiful figure, stands on the *trumeau* of the central door with the Virgin in her arms. On the tympanum above Mary is crowned by her Son. Patriarchs and prophets stand to right and left. These impressive and dignified figures have a note of expectancy as they await the coming of the Lord. On the tympanum of the right door are scenes from the life of Job, whose sufferings were

regarded as typical of those of Christ. The figures grouped round this door are drawn exclusively from the Old Testament. Very beautiful, too, is the statue of St. Modesta who, according to tradition, was the daughter of the Roman Governor of Chartres and suffered martyrdom at her father's hands. The statue of St. Potentian, her fellow-martyr, has unfortunately been much mutilated. The tympanum and lintel of the left door are devoted to scenes from the Nativity, and the Wise and Foolish Virigins and the Virtues and Vices appear on the voussoirs of the door. A group of statues of special beauty concerned with the Visitation and Annunciation stand to left and right of this door. The work of creation is set out in elaborate fashion on the archivolts of the outer bays, and the exquisite bas reliefs that symbolise the active and contemplative life are among the finest at Chartres.

It is, however, with the Romanesque portal of the west front that I am specially concerned in this chapter. For here we have the supreme example of Romanesque as distinct from Gothic art. Many writers on archæology have commented on the greater note of tranquillity that marks the advent of the Gothic period. The age of experiment is over, and the horizon widens. *Farouche* elements of an earlier art drop out of sight; clouds that gathered round the dawn have vanished. Now the sun rises in a clear sky.

The sculptures of the west door at Chartres, though Romanesque, are already stirred by the new breath that blows from Île de France. I referred in the last chapter to Monsieur Mâle's hypothesis that Suger brought sculptors from Languedoc to work at St. Denis, and that after 1144 either the *atelier* as a whole or individuals composing it worked on the west front at Chartres. The Royal Portal when new must have presented a very different appearance from what we see today. Traces of polychromy have been found, and it is clear that the façade originally was covered from end to end with brilliant colours. We are apt to recoil a little from the thought of paint and gilding applied to stone, but a process used by both Greek and mediæval sculptors at the height of their powers is one that we are

bound to accept as possessing qualities of excellence not very clear to us today.

At Chartres, as at St. Denis, the west front consists of three carved portals, the place of honour in the central tympanum being filled by a Christ in Glory. This tympanum at Chartres is the culminating example of the great series of Christs in Glory and of Last Judgments that we have seen at Moissac, at Beaulieu, at Cahors, at St. Denis. It registers, however, a great advance in technique on the earlier work. It is possible that the inspiration comes from Carennac where, as at Chartres, Christ is seated in a mandorla holding a book in one hand while the other is raised in blessing. At Chartres, as at Carennac, seated figures of the Apostles are grouped round the Master. Some of them have the same feature of legs rather awkwardly crossed. But the Christ at Chartres is a more benign and more compassionate figure than any we have met in the earlier tympana. Though not open to any reproach of facility, the tympanum is the best evidence that sculpture has passed beyond the stage of experiment and is now in full control of its medium. Between the implacable judge of Moissac, the prototype of the whole series of Last Judgments, and the Christ of the Royal Portal a new spirit has entered into sculpture. Terror yields place to a sense of grave beauty. Without any loss of power we are conscious of a greater sense of harmony. This triple note of harmony, power, and beauty runs through the whole magnificent scheme of the west front at Chartres. The noble Christ of the central door sits in glory in a mandorla surrounded by the animals of the Apocalyptic vision. The draperies are treated with great skill and follow closely the lines of the body; the animals are admirably rendered. This iconography is familiar, but the execution is touched with new power. The Christ of the Royal Portal combines in unique degree qualities of power and pity. Reigning triumphant in Heaven, His heart is still moved with compassion for the humanity He deigned to share. This figure transcends in majestic aloofness the Gothic statue of the Teaching Christ on the *trumeau* of the south door. But the change in values between these two works

of art is the measure of the change that has come over sculpture.

The Apostles seated on the lintel below the central tympanum are grouped in threes under a canopy that recalls a very similar arrangement at Cahors. Three archivolts surround the tympanum, the inner one carved with figures of angels, the two outer with Elders of the Apocalypse holding musical instruments. The central porch is flanked to right and left by two lateral doors. The tympanum of the left door is filled with a noble sculpture of the Ascension, inspired probably from the tympanum of Cahors. Christ disappears into a cloud the ends of which are upheld by two angels staggering backwards with the gesture of worship and astonishment that we have met before in Languedoc. Equally familiar seem the four delicious angels who are precipitating themselves head first to tell the Apostles gathered on the lintel the news of the Ascension. The tympana of the side doors are surrounded by two, not three, archivolts, and the scene of the Ascension is enclosed by the familiar theme of the Signs of the Zodiac alternating with the Labours of the Months.

The tympanum of the right door marks an epoch in sculpture. Here for the first time we find a Virgin in Majesty. So important is this innovation that it calls for special notice. The cathedral, let us remember, is dedicated to Notre Dame, and the personality of the Virgin is the dominant note of the building. In the north porch we saw how the noblest tribute of Gothic sculpture was laid at her feet as Queen of Heaven. The Royal Portal indicates the first stage in this great development.

In preceding chapters I have referred more than once to the steady development during the twelfth century of the cult of Mary. At first a modest, not to say inconspicuous figure in scenes of the Nativity and Passion—an accessory only to her Son—as time goes on her personality commands more and more attention. At Souillac we saw her descending from Heaven in order to rescue the unfortunate Theophilus. At Cahors she appears as the central figure of the lintel surrounded by Apostles. In the Gothic cathedrals she reigns supreme as Queen of

Heaven, a new position for the first time fully developed at Chartres.

Christian worship at Chartres had from its dawn been bound up with the worship of the Virgin. We saw in Auvergne, where Gallo-Roman influence was strong, the popularity of small wooden statues of the Virgin and Child, possibly inspired by some Pagan image of a mother goddess. At Chartres a grotto subsequently incorporated in the crypt had from earliest times contained a rude figure of this type. Extraordinary sanctity attached to this image, and thanks to it Chartres was famous as a pilgrimage place. The original statue, the famous Black Virgin, discoloured by age and the smoke of innumerable candles, was destroyed at the Revolution, and the present Black Virgin in the crypt—a seated figure with the Child on her knees—is a modern reproduction. It is not surprising, therefore, that a further development in the cult of the Virgin should take its rise at Chartres.

Legend was busy with the Virgin from the early days of the Church. The scanty references to her in the Gospels were found insufficient, and piety set out to make good the deficiency by manufacturing details about her birth, her family, her death. Religious sentiment dwelt more and more during the twelfth century on these charming but wholly apocryphal tales, and the Gothic sculptors found in them new and attractive material.

The bas relief on the Royal Portal of an enthroned Virgin and Child was obviously inspired by the statue in the crypt. It was a gift apparently from the Archdeacon Richer about the year 1155. Daring though the innovation, it met with instantaneous success. The Virgin in Majesty at Chartres was copied a few years later on the Porte Ste. Anne at Notre Dame in Paris, and from that time onwards the Virgin becomes more and more important in the iconography of the Gothic cathedrals. Bourges imitated Paris, and there, as at Rheims, the Virgin sits with added dignity under a ciborium. As her legend grows the iconography changes. We see her on the west front of Notre Dame at Paris, a crowned and regal figure sitting next her Son, and subsequently on the north door of the same church,

[*Photo. Edit. Giraudon.*

CHARTRES : ROYAL PORTAL (SHEPHERDS OF NATIVITY).

a majestic single figure with the Babe in her arms. Chartres, her own cathedral, places her during the thirteenth century on the central tympanum of the north portal, and a magnificent scheme of decoration is worked out to redound to her glory. Senlis devotes a whole tympanum to her, and for sheer beauty there are few scenes in Gothic art to touch the exquisite bas relief of the lintel, where a group of angels full of eagerness and tender anxiety crowd round the body of the Virgin and prepare to carry it to Heaven. But as Gothic in its later days grows facile, the Virgin loses her appearance of superhuman dignity. She steps down from Paradise to earth. We are no longer impressed by the Queen of Heaven but admire a pretty girl wearing a crown. Ruskin goes so far as to speak of the "gay soubrette smile" of the Virgin of Amiens. We are far from the early days and the early difficulties of figure sculpture, but clearly a realistic study of village models has its dangers when applied to divine personages.

Of these subsequent drawbacks the Virgin at Chartres, prototype of a great development, has no trace. She sits, Babe in lap, a Romanesque figure, austere and remote, flanked by angels who cense her with gestures of adoration. The double lintel and the archivolts contain some of the most moving and famous bas reliefs of the whole portal: the Annunciation, the Visitation, and a striking Nativity with a new iconography—the Virgin in bed and the Babe in His cradle placed as on an altar above it—Divine Victim already offered for the sins of the world. Finally the most delightful shepherds, with a flock of highly stylised sheep, come to worship the Mother and Child. No less remarkable are the figures in the archivolts—a row of six angels and the famous bas reliefs of the seven Liberal Arts symbolised by women. Each figure is accompanied by a classical sage renowned for excellence in the science represented—Dialectic by Aristotle, Rhetoric by Cicero, Geometry by Euclid, Arithmetic by either Boethius or Pythagoras, Astronomy by Ptolemy. Grammar, whom we met at Cluny, is here again with her flail, a formidable-looking lady who will certainly stand no nonsense from the two children at her feet. Either Priscian or Donatus

keeps her company. The sages have desks on their knees and are heavy bearded figures. The hand at work on these bas reliefs was powerful but somewhat rude.

But the crowning figure of the Royal Portal has still to be mentioned: the nineteen marvellous statues—originally there were twenty-four—attached to columns that are grouped round the entrances of the doors. The historiated capitals they carry tell the story in a continuous frieze, broken only by the doors, of the ancestry and birth of Mary and subsequently the history of her Son. The Apocryphal Gospels were drawn on for the iconography as well as the New Testament, and so the touching tale of Joachim and Anna is included in the thirty-eight scenes that compose the frieze. There are some gaps in the sequence of the story due to transpositions: when the portal was taken down and rebuilt in its present place accidents might easily happen with the capitals. The narrative starts to the left of the central door with Anna and Joachim being refused admission to the Temple. Moving always to the left, it includes legends of the birth of Mary, her presentation in the Temple, her marriage to Joseph, followed by familiar scenes of the Annunciation, Visitation, Nativity, and Flight into Egypt. This side of the long ribbon of sculpture ends on the extreme left of the portal. The second streamer starts to the right of the central door with a capital of Jesus among the doctors. As it is followed by a Circumcision and Presentation, clearly a capital of the Nativity is missing or out of place here. This series of capitals represents incidents in the life of Christ—the Baptism, Temptation, Entry into Jerusalem, Last Supper, Betrayal—and ends with the Walk to Emmaus and the Ascension. Many of these capitals are mutilated, and their meaning is not always clear. They include over 200 little figures, and the sculptures have all the quality at once naïve and vigorous of Romanesque sculpture.

The statues surrounding the doors take us into another world or, rather, higher values of the same world. The iconography of the figures is uncertain, possibly they represent the kings and illustrious women of the Old Testament in whom the Middle Ages saw precursors and ances-

tors of Christ. We have no clue as to the merit of similar statues grouped, as we saw, by Suger round the west door of St. Denis; we only know that his example copied at Chartres brings us face to face with religious sculpture on a level of perfection unsurpassed and unexcelled.

Needless to say, the sculptures of the west front have not traversed the vicissitudes of nearly nine hundred years intact. Some are damaged, some have been restored—the king on the extreme left of the portal has been clumsily refitted with a woman's head. But taken as a whole the portal is intact. Its quality triumphs over the inevitable scars inflicted on it by the passing of time.

These figures are very long in proportion to their breadth, a fact determined by the architectural purpose they serve, for they are not independent statues but form part of the columns. They stand on richly carved pedestals of varied design, and their heads are covered by beautiful stone canopies. Some of these unhappily are destroyed, but those that remain represent miniature buildings with walls and windows—symbols, perhaps, of the New Jerusalem. Their robes fall in long, stiff folds, at once graceful and severe. Jewels and garments are treated with consummate skill. Each face has its own individuality, but nearly all of them are touched by mystic awe. Guardians of the courts of Heaven, it is as though their souls were illumined by the Beatific Vision. Among the most celebrated of these personages are the three queens—to give them their popular name—of the central door. The first, on the angle between the central and left doors, a figure of abnormal length, wears a nun's coif as well as a crown. She clasps a book in her hands, and the delicate, rapt countenance is full of unearthly beauty. Next to her is a queen with two long plaits of hair, more human, more worldly, whose individuality makes itself felt to this day. The third queen is a dignified, gracious lady, of whose sceptre nothing remains but the ornament at the top. She appears to lean ever so slightly forward and to smile on those who come to offer homage. The "kings"—more correctly saints or prophets, some wearing close-fitting caps—are solemn, dignified figures worthy of their queens.

It is hopeless to try and convey any idea by the written word of the superb quality of these figures and the mingled power and delicacy with which every detail of the work is carried out. Solemn and mysterious, with here and there a countenance lit up by a dim smile, the kings and queens of the Royal Portal stir in us the most profound instincts of our being. They make us feel the essential divinity that lies at the root of life and that we too are of kin to the king.

These long archaic figures with their pleated robes, their crowns, their halos, their braided hair, do not seek to emancipate themselves from the architectural restraints of their positions. They are content to be shafts of columns, forming part of the building and helping to sustain it, not clamorous individual personalities. And to an age of determined self-expression in art as in morals, do they not convey a lesson and a warning—the lesson that when some element of limitation is faithfully accepted and endured life is not quenched but intensified, and that power and beauty are added to it in fullest measure? "Without struggle there is no coming into rest," writes Thomas à Kempis, "nor without fighting can the victory be obtained." The art of the west portal at Chartres has touched a level reached at no easy price. Here indeed there is calm and victory won over a stubborn medium. But it is victory won through stern discipline and unresting struggle.

It is this solemn other-world quality in Romanesque sculpture at its best, a quality lacking somehow in later Gothic work, that makes so profound an appeal to our imagination. The lateral portals of Chartres, as we saw, are crowded with splendid figures and enchanting detail. Far be it from me to say one word that could be thought depreciative about work so fine and so famous. Yet, magnificent though they are, these personages are human, not divine. They are more perfect, more accomplished, but the law of compensation takes its toll of them as inexorably as in every other relation of life. As we pass from the west portal to the north and south doors we are conscious of a change. The note of awe, the note of striving

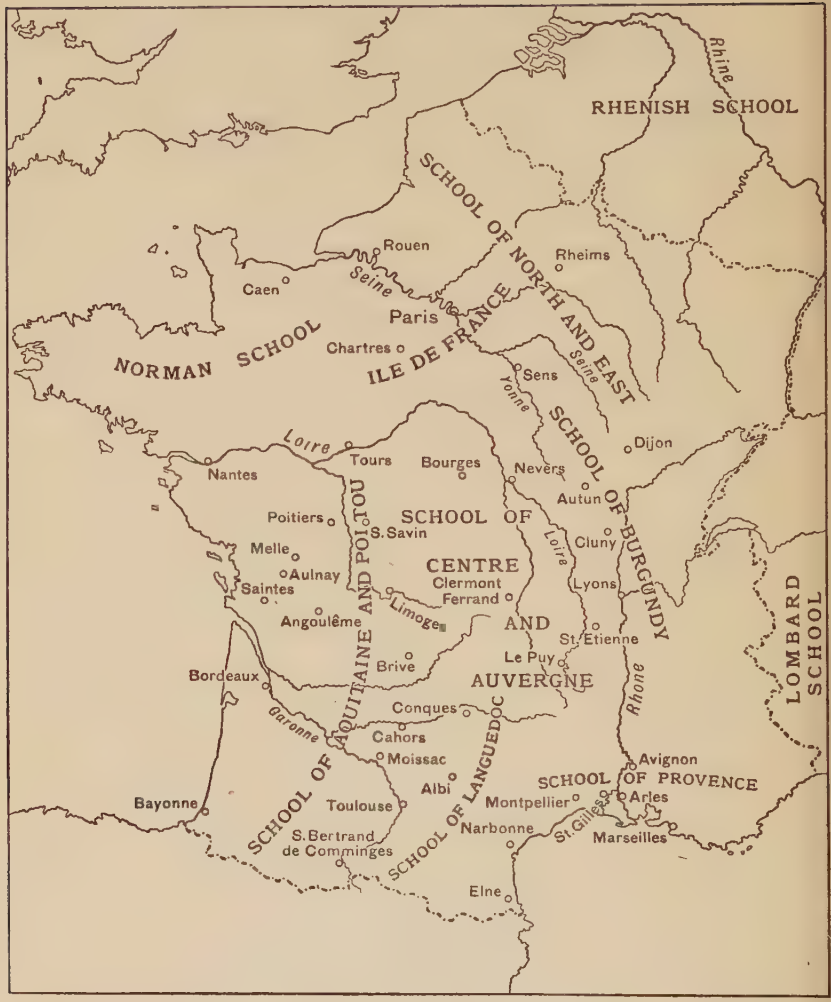
[*Photo. Edit. Giraudon.*

CHARTRES : ROYAL PORTAL (A QUEEN).

[P. 486

has gone; the heavens have closed over the angels and their song; the shepherds have returned to their flocks, the magi to their kingdoms.

The last word of Romanesque art is spoken before the Royal Portal of Chartres. And here my story ends. May the scattered links I have gathered together in so halting and imperfect a fashion in this book serve at least to draw attention to the noble whole of which they form a part!



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FRANCE, SHOWING THE DISTRIBUTION OF THE ROMANESQUE SCHOOLS.

APPENDIX I

The following list of Romanesque churches in different parts of France (other than those described in this book) may be of assistance to the reader when planning a tour. Churches of special beauty and interest are marked with an asterisk, but the list is in no sense exhaustive, and many buildings remain to provide travellers with the thrill of discovering for themselves fine examples of Romanesque work that exist in the various provinces.

Burgundy :

*S. Philibert Tournus (Saône et Loire)
Notre Dame, Beaune (Côte d'Or)
*Paray le Monial (Saône et Loire)
*Avallon (Yonne)
*Charlieu (Loire)
*La Charité sur Loire (Nièvre)
*Saulieu (Côte d'Or)
Neuilly-en-Donjon (Côte d'Or)
Sémur en Brionnais (Saône et Loire)
Nevers (Nièvre)

Auvergne :

*S. Julien de Brioude (Haute Loire)
S. Saturnin (Puy de Dôme)
*Mozac (Puy de Dôme)
*Orcival (Puy de Dôme)
Ennezat (Puy de Dôme)
Riom (Puy de Dôme)
Le Dorat (Haute Vienne)

Languedoc East :

*Fontfroide (Aude)
Agde (Herault)
*Elne (Pyrenées Orientales)
S. Martin de Londres (Herault)

Languedoc West :

*S. Bertrand de Comminges (Haute Garonne)
Dax (Landes)

Poitou and Aquitaine :

*Parthenay le Vieux (Deux Sèvres)
Civray (Vienne)
*Ruffec (Charente)
Échellais (Charante Inférieure)
Niort (Deux Sèvres)
Retaud (Charente Inférieure)
Cognac (Charente)
Rieux (Charente Inférieure)
Vouvant (Vendée)
*Carennac (Lot)

Provence :

S. Marthe de Tarascon (Bouches du Rhône)
S. Paul Trois Châteaux (Drôme)
Vaison (Vaucluse)
Montmajour (Bouches du Rhône)
Carpentras (Vaucluse)
SS. Maries de la Mer (Bouches du Rhône)
Notre Dame des Doms, Avignon (Vaucluse)
S. Victor and the ruins of the Old Cathedral, Marseilles (Bouches du Rhône)

Normandy :

Cérisy la Forêt (Manche)
*S. Germer (Oise)
Falaise (Calvados)
Lessay (Manche)
Ouistreham (Calvados)
Secqueville en Bessin (Calvados)
Mont S. Michel (Manche)

Ile de France :

*S. Loup de Naud (Seine et Marne)
*S. Ayoul et S. Quiriace, Provins (Seine et Marne)
S. Etienne, Beauvais (Oise)
Morienval (Oise)
Le Mans (Sarthe)
S. Leu d'Esserent (Oise)

OTHER DISTRICTS

The Loire and Allier Valleys :

*S. Benoit sur Loire (Loiret)
Fontevrault (Maine et Loire)
Saumur (Maine et Loire)
Angers (Maine et Loire)
Souvigny (Allier)
S. Minoux (Allier)

The Rhone Valley :

Church of S. Martin d'Ainay and apse of Cathedral. Lyons (Rhône),

S. André le Bas and parts of Cathedral, Vienne (Isère)

Champagne :

Vignory (Haute Marne)

Cathedral of S. Mammès, Langres (Haute Marne)

APPENDIX II

SOME DATES OF IMPORTANCE IN HISTORY AND ARCHÆOLOGY BETWEEN THE PEACE OF THE CHURCH (313) AND THE PEACE OF CHINON (1214)

313. Peace of the Church (Edict of Milan).
315. Council of Nicæa.
330. Foundation of Constantinople.
336 (?). Church of Holy Sepulchre, Jerusalem.
337 (*circa*). Church of Holy Apostles, Constantinople, completed.
370 (*circa*). St. Martin Bishop of Tours.
409. The Romans leave Britain.
410. Sack of Rome by Alaric.
432 (?). St. Patrick's Mission to Ireland.
440 (*circa*). Tomb of Galla Placidia, Ravenna.
472. Sidonius Apollinaris Bishop of Clermont.
476. Abdication of Romulus Augustulus. End of Western Empire (Odoacer King of Italy).
500. Theodoric the Goth at Ravenna.
507. Clovis defeats Alaric at Poitiers.
527. Justinian Emperor of the East.
532. Rededication of St. Sophia, Constantinople.
536. Conquests of Belisarius in Italy.
543. Death of St. Benedict.
555. Rome annexed to Eastern Empire.
565. Death of Justinian.
576. Birth of Mahomet.
594 (*circa*). Death of Gregory of Tours.
597. Landing at Thanet of Augustine.
604. Death of Pope Gregory the Great.
622. Era of Hegira. Flight of Mahomet from Medina to Mecca. Commencement of Arab Conquests.
634. Omar, Caliph.
637. Ctesiphon conquered by Arabs.
638. Jerusalem conquered by Arabs.
642. Alexandria capitulates to Arabs.
644. Death of Caliph Omar.
664. Synod of Whitby.
669. Theodore of Tarsus, Archbishop of Canterbury.
674. Benedict Biscop at Jarrow. Ruthwell and Bewcastle Crosses (*circa*).
700 (*circa*). "Beowulf."
725. Beginning of Iconoclast Controversy (Leo the Isaurian).
730 (*circa*). Alcuin born at York.

732. Charles Martel defeats Arabs at Battle of Tours.
735. Death of Venerable Bede.
778. Battle of Roncevalles, and death of Roland.
786. Haround al Raschid Caliph at Bagdad.
786 (*circa*). Mosque at Cordoba (now Cathedral) built by Abdurrahman I.
800. Charlemagne crowned Emperor at Rome. Haround al Raschid's Embassy to Charlemagne.
805. Consecration by Leo X. of Charlemagne's chapel, Aix la Chapelle.
806. Consecration of Germigny des Prés.
850. Restoration of images by Michael the Drunkard.
871–899. Reign of Alfred the Great.
880 (*circa*). Death of John Scotus.
910. Foundation of Cluny by Duke William of Aquitaine.
912. Treaty of St. Clair-sur-Epte between Rollo, the Northman and Charles the Simple.
912–961. Abdurrahman III. Golden Age of Arab rule in Spain.
927–941. Odo Abbot of Cluny.
962. Otto I. crowned Emperor.
987. Hugh Capet King of France.
990. Foundation of Fécamp by Duke Richard I. of Normandy.
997–1011 (*circa*). St. Martin of Tours rebuilt.
998. Marriage of Constance of Toulouse to King Robert of France.
1000. William of Volpiano at St. Bénigne, Dijon.
1006. Fulbert, Bishop of Chartres.
1017. Foundation of Bernay.
1027. Birth of William the Conqueror.
1030–1061. Spires Cathedral.
1036. Foundation of St. Rémi, Rheims.
1036. Birth of the Cid.
1042. Lanfranc Abbot of Bec. Edward the Confessor King of England.
1046. Birth of Matilda of Tuscany.
1047. Battle of Val les Dunes.
1049. Consecration of St. Hilaire, Poitiers.
1049. Consecration of St. Maria im Capitol, Cologne, by Pope Leo IX.
1050. Foundation of Westminster Abbey by Edward the Confessor.
1059. Foundation of La Trinité, Caen (Abbaye aux Dames).
1063. Consecration of Abbot Durand's Church at Moissac.
1066. Battle of Hastings.
1067. Consecration of Jumièges.
1070 (*circa*). Bronze doors at Hildesheim Cathedral (Bishop Bernward).
1071. Lanfranc Archbishop of Canterbury.
1073. Gregory VII. (Hildebrand) Pope.
1076. Humiliation of Emperor Henry IV. at Canossa.
1077. St. Etienne (Abbaye aux Dames), Caen, consecrated.
1079–1093. Winchester Cathedral building (Bishop Walkelin).

1079. Abélard born.
1080. Raymond Gayard architect of St. Sernin, Toulouse.
1084. Sack of Rome.
1085–1115. Ansquitil Abbot of Moissac. Pillars of cloister and bas-reliefs of Apostles, Moissac.
1087. Death of William the Conqueror.
1088. St. Hugh, Abbot of Cluny, rebuilds Abbey Church.
1091. Birth of St. Bernard.
1093 (*circa*). Durham Cathedral building (Bishop Carilef).
1094. St. Mark's, Venice, rebuilt and reconsecrated.
1095. Consecration of choir of Cluny by Urban II.
1095. First Crusade (Peter the Hermit).
1096. Apse and transepts of St. Sernin, Toulouse, consecrated by Urban II.
1098. Foundation of Cistercian Order by St. Robert of Citeaux.
1100. Ely Cathedral building.
1100. Southwell Cathedral building.
1104. Consecration of Abbot Artaud's church at Vézelay.
1110. Consecration of Worms Cathedral.
1115. St. Albans Abbey consecrated.
1115–1131. Roger Abbot of Moissac. Capitals of cloister (?).
1116 (*circa*). Crypt of St. Gilles begun.
1120. St. Front, Périgueux, destroyed by fire.
1120. Abbot Artaud's church, Vézelay, destroyed by fire.
1122. Peter the Venerable Abbot of Cluny.
1128. Santiago de Compostela consecrated.
1128. Consecration of Angoulême Cathedral.
1130–1140. Tympanum of Moissac (?).
1130. Reconsecration of Canterbury Cathedral (Priors Ernulph and Conrad).
1132. Consecration of Autun and Vézelay by Innocent II.
1132. Final consecration of Cluny by Innocent II.
1134. Great Fire at Chartres.
1135. Fountains Abbey building.
1137. Marriage of Eleanor of Aquitaine to Louis VII. of France.
1139 (*circa*). San Zeno, Verona, remodelled.
1142. Death of Abélard.
1144. Consecration of St. Denis.
1145. Towers and narthex of Chartres.
1147. Second Crusade preached by St. Bernard at Vézelay.
1150 (*circa*). Sculptures west front of Chartres.
1150 (*circa*). Façade of Notre Dame la Grande, Poitiers (?).
1152. Marriage of Eleanor of Aquitaine to Henry II. of England.
1152. Frederick Barbarossa Holy Roman Emperor.
1152. Death of Abbot Suger.
1153. Death of St. Bernard.
1156. Consecration of Abbey Church of Laach.
1159. Frères Hospitaliers Pontifes recognised by Pope Clement III.

1160. Sens, Laon and Notre Dame, Paris, Cathedrals begun.
1167. General Council held by Albigenses at Toulouse.
1170 (*circa*). Benedetto Antelami working at Parma Cathedral.
1170. Birth of St. Dominick.
1174. William of Sens at Canterbury.
1180 (?) (*circa*). Cloister, St. Trophime, Arles.
1180. Philip Augustus King of France.
1182. Birth of St. Francis of Assisi.
1187. Conquest of Jerusalem by Saladin.
1188 (*circa*). Portico della Gloria, Santiago de Compostela.
1188. Third Crusade.
1189. Death of Henry II. of England.
1194. Great Fire at Chartres. Gothic Cathedral begun.
1198. Innocent III. Pope.
1204. Fourth Crusade and Sack of Constantinople.
1204. Death of Eleanor of Aquitaine.
1208. Murder of Peter of Castelnau at St. Gilles.
1209. Count Raymond of Toulouse " brought before the doors " of St. Gilles.
1214. Philip Augustus defeats English at Battle of Bouvines. Peace of Chinon.

APPENDIX III

GLOSSARY OF SOME ARCHITECTURAL AND OTHER TERMS USED IN "ROMANESQUE FRANCE"

Abacus. A square or oblong slab forming the upper member of a capital.

Ambulatory. A circular aisle round the choir or sanctuary of a church. In some churches the sanctuary is enclosed by columns and arcades, and is separated by the ambulatory from a ring of radiating chapels thrown out to provide more space for altars, relics and worshippers. In large churches the ambulatory may be regarded as a continuation of the side aisles of the nave.

Apse. A semicircular or polygonal recess at the end of the choir or aisles of a church. Originally the recess in the Roman basilica. Hence *apsidioles*, smaller semicircular recesses forming a ring of radiating chapels round the main apse. Sometimes found on the arm or at the end of the transept.

Arcades. A series of arches supported by columns and piers. Arcades are either open (as in the nave of a church) or are closed with masonry. The French often use the word *arcature* to describe a series of small blind arches (arches without openings) resting on colonnettes which form an ornamental dressing to a wall.

Archivolt. The series of mouldings which form the ensemble of an arch. See *Voussoir.*

Barrel vault. A vault with a plain semi-cylindrical section like a half-barrel.

Billet. An ornamental moulding often used in Norman architecture, consisting of short pieces (imitating wooden billets) placed lengthwise at regular intervals in hollow mouldings.

Chevet. The east end of a church. The term is generally applied to a church with an apse and a ring of radiating chapels.

Chevron. A fret **V**-shaped ornament often used in the decoration of arches in Norman architecture.

Ciborium. A canopy covering a shrine or altar.

Clerestory. The upper part of a church lying above the triforium (or if there is no triforium immediately over the arches of the nave, choir, or transepts) containing a series of windows.

Corbels. Blocks of stone or other constructional material projecting from the wall and supporting the beams of a roof or the parapet of a wall. They are often elaborately carved, sometimes with heads. A projecting course carried by a row of corbels is known as a corbel table.

Entrelacs. The French word for an interlaced or braided ornament consisting of two or more bands twisting over each other so as to repeat the same figure in a continued series. In English called *guilloche.*

Godroon. A set of inverted flutings joined at their extremities to form a decorative pattern often used in Norman architecture.

Groined vault. A vault formed by the intersection at right angles of two barrel vaults. The lines of intersection so traced are called groins.

Historiated capitals. Capitals decorated with men and fantastic animals, either single or in groups. Capitals carved with figure sculpture are called historiated because they tell a history or tale.

Iconography. In Christian art the representation of religious subjects and moral virtues through the medium of sculpture, pictures and images.

Jubé. A screen of wood or stone, often elaborately carved, separating the choir from the nave.

Mandorla. An almond-shaped lozenge usually containing a figure of Christ.

Modillion. A projecting bracket placed in series under the cornice (akin to the corbel).

Narthex. In early Christian churches and basilicas a portico or vestibule at the western end set apart for women, catechumens and penitents. In Romanesque churches the narthex forms an entrance porch varying in size and importance. In English Norman architecture a porch or chapel at the entrance of a church (as at Durham) is sometimes called a Galilee.

Oliphant. A long horn or trumpet in ivory, sometimes elaborately carved.

Pendentives. Triangular segments of wall filling the four corners immediately below the dome of a cupola; the alternative method to the squinch of passing from the square to the round.

Phylactery. In sculpture a term sometimes applied to a long engraved scroll carried by a saint or prophet. In French called *banderole.* (Note, the term phylactery in general use is applied to a leather box containing four texts of Scripture written in Hebrew and worn by Jews during morning prayer.)

Polylobé. The term applied to the decoration of an arch (common in the Saintonge) the circle of which is divided into projecting segments.

Rinceau. An ornament consisting of scroll work or wreaths of flowers or fruit.

Rosace. A rose-shaped ornament.

Spandrel. The triangular space between the shoulders of two contiguous arches and the moulding above them.

Squinch. A small arch thrown across an angle to facilitate passing from a square base to a round cupola or drum.

Stylisation. A term applied to works of art represented in a conventional or deliberately simplified form so as to emphasise the essential features.

Triforium. A gallery or arcade with openings of two or more bays in the wall immediately above the arches of the nave, choir, or transept. In French the word *tribune* is often used to describe the triforium gallery and the word *triforium* limited to the openings. It should be noted that in English the word "tribune" has another meaning, and is used in the sense of dais or pulpit.

Trumeau. The French term for a shaft or column sometimes elaborately carved.

Voussoir. In English the word has the limited sense of one of the wedge-shaped blocks of stone or brick forming the moulding round the exterior of an arch. In French the word *voussure* is sometimes used to describe the whole moulding as well as the individual block. The series of mouldings constituting the ensemble of the arch is called the archivolt.

APPENDIX IV

For the convenience of travellers I have worked out the following tables of long-distance routes and shorter routes concerned with places mentioned in this book. The distances throughout are in kilometres, and have been compiled from the Michelin Road Book and the Guides Bleus. Cartes Tarides are essential to the motorist in France, and I have found Bartholomew's excellent Contour Motoring Map of France in two sections no less indispensable as a travelling companion.

LONG-DISTANCE ROUTES

1. *Paris to Avignon (via Sens and Dijon) :*
   Paris—Sens 105—Dijon 295—Mâcon 419—Lyons 588—Avignon 812
2. *Dijon to Montpellier :*
   Dijon—Beaune 37—Mâcon 124—Lyons 193—Avignon 417—Nîmes 459—Montpellier 508
3. *Montpellier to Toulouse :*
   Montpellier—Beziers 73—Narbonne 100—Carcassonne 156—Toulouse 251
4. *Toulouse to Bordeaux :*
   Toulouse—Castelsarrasin 58—Moissac 66—Agen 109—Bordeaux 244
5. *Toulouse to Poitiers (via Périgueux and Angoulême) :*
   Toulouse—Montauban 51—Cahors 111—Périgueux 237—Angoulême 321—Poitiers 430
6. *Toulouse to Poitiers (via Brive and Limoges) :*
   Toulouse—Montauban 51—Cahors 111—Brive 212—Limoges 305—Poitiers 423
7. *Paris to Poitiers :*
   Paris—Orleans 113—Tours 228—Poitiers 330
8. *Caen to Poitiers :*
   Caen—Falaise 34—Alençon 101—Le Mans 150—Tours 232—Poitiers 334
9. *From the Loire Valley to Dijon :*
   Tours—Bourges 148—Nevers 212—Autun 315—Dijon 400
10. *Paris to Rouen and Le Havre :*
    Paris—Rouen 117—Le Havre 201

SHORTER ROUTES

1. Paris—Rheims 147
   Paris—Chartres 84
   Paris—Rouen 117
   Paris—Dijon 295
   Paris—Provins 79
   Paris—Senlis 37

2. Dijon—Avallon 101—Vézelay 117
   Dijon—Autun 85
   Dijon—Mâcon 128
   Dijon—Nevers 189
   Dijon—Sémur-en-Auxois 71

3. Nevers—La Charité-sur-Loire 24—Orléans 157

4. Autun—Auxerre 131
   Autun—Avallon 80
   Autun—Saulieu 41

5. Mâcon—Cluny 24
   Mâcon—Charolles 54—Paray-le-Monial 166

6. Lyons—St. Étienne 126—Le Puy 203
   Lyons — Beaune 88 — Charlieu 107

7. Avignon — Tarascon 23 — Arles 40—St. Gilles 59
   Avignon—Nîmes 42—Montpellier 91

8. St. Gilles—Nîmes 20
   St. Gilles—Arles 19
   St. Gilles—Tarascon 24

9. Montpellier—Palavas (Maguelone) 11
   Montpellier—St. Guilhem le Désert 39

10. Le Puy—Brioude 64—Clermont Ferrand 132

11. Clermont Ferrand—Aurillac 161—Rodez 255
    Clermont Ferrand — Issoire 35—St. Nectaire 61
    Clermont Ferrand—Le Puy 132
    Clermont Ferrand — Riom (Mozac) 15
    Clermont Ferrand — Orcival 26

12. Toulouse—Albi 76—Rodez 155—Conques 191
    Toulouse—St. Bertrand de Comminges 106
    Toulouse—Moissac 66

13. Brive—Cahors 101
    Brive—Souillac 35
    Brive—Figeac 92—Conques 145
    Brive—Périgueux 73
    Brive—Beaulieu 45

14. Angoulême—Limoges 103—Clermont Ferrand 293
    Angoulême — Cognac 42 — Saintes 69
    Angoulême—Périgueux 84
    Angoulême—Melle 75

15. Poitiers—Tours 102
    Poitiers—Melle 56—Aulnay 84
    Poitiers—St. Savin-sur-Gartempe 42
    Poitiers—Parthenay 51
    Poitiers—Angoulême 109

16. Rouen — Gournay-en-Braye (for St. Germer) 50
    Rouen—Bernay 58
    Rouen—Caen 121
    Rouen — Lisieux 82 — Caen 131—Bayeux 158
    Rouen—St. Georges de Boscheville 11—Jumièges 27

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INDEX

Aachen, Charlemagne's church at, 37; Arab Mission to, 63
Abadie, Paul, 132, 199, 261. Restoration of St. Hilaire, Poitiers, 308; of Cathedral, Angoulême, 346 *et seq.*; of St. Front, Périgueux, 364 *et seq.*
Abdurrahman, 28
Abélard, 80, 107; controversy with St. Bernard, 112; dies at Cluny, 113
Adam and Eve. *See* Iconography
Addai, 5 (footnote); builder of church at Edessa, 15
Agnes of Burgundy, 359
Agnes, Countess of Poitou, completes St. Hilaire, Poitou, 307
Agnes Sorel, 454
Aigues Mortes, 382, 396
Aigulf of Fleury, 126
Aix en Provence, 390
Albi, 185, 277
Albigenses, 65, 70, 80, 87, 112, 181 *et seq.*; religious doctrine of, 185-188; persecution of, by Pope Innocent III., 189-193. *See also* Toulouse
Alexander III., Pope, at Maugelone, 416
Alexandria: early Christian communities at, 4, 5; Pompeian School of Painting at, 10; metaphysicians of, 12; *also* 17, 19, 63
Alphonse VI., King of Spain, benefactions to Cluny, 106
Anglo-Saxon culture in Europe, 31
Angoulême, 346 *et seq.*; St. Pierre, 347-350. *See also* St. Pierre, Angoulême
Angoumois, 289; domed churches in, 361, 367
Aniane, 419; monastic centre, 423, 424
Animal and bird themes: in Catacombs, 11, 66; in illuminated MS., 28; Oriental origin of, 29, 66; in Irish art, 31, 66; in Græco-Scythian art, 36; in Byzantine art, 65; in Barbarian art, 66; in Romanesque art, 66, 71; on historiated capitals, 69, 71; in bestiaries, 76; denounced by St. Bernard, 78. *See also* Romanesque Sculpture, Capitals
Anne of Brittany, 165
Anselm, 445, 447
Ansquitil, Abbot at Moissac, 216, 217, 222, 227
Antelami, Benedetto, 404, 405
Anthemius, Roman Emperor, 247
Anthony, founder of monasticism, 21
Anthony, St.: on capitals at Vézelay, 142, 143; on Ruthwell Cross, 142
Antioch, early Christian Church at, 4, 5, 6, 17
Apocalypse, representation of, on Catacombs, 20; 76. *See also* Iconography
Apollinaris, Sidonius, Bishop of Clermont: letters of, 61, 243, 246, 248, 251, 253; birth and early life of, 245, 246; at Rome, 247; in Gaul, 248, 249; imprisonment and death of, 250; wealth of, 252
Apuleius, *Golden Ass*, 30
Aquitaine: school of architecture of, 53, 289 *et seq.*; domed churches of, 361 *et seq.* *See also* Eleanor of Aquitaine, William of Aquitaine
Arabs: conquests by, 25, 28, 61, 62; science and learning of, 63, 112; Mission to Charlemagne, 63
Archambaud, Otier, 347
Architecture, Romanesque schools of: in France, 39, 40, 41, 45, 53; in Germany, 39, 40, 41, 53; in Lombardy, 30, 40, 41; monastic origin of, 47
Arles, 23, 24, 41, 50; The Camargue and Roman Arles, 378-386. St. Trophime, 386, 389; date of, 390; cloister of, and statues of Apostles, 391; portal, 392, 393
Arnaud, Bishop, builds Cathedral of St. Pierre, Maguelone, 411, 414
Arnold, Matthew, *The Church of Brou*, 162-165, 173, 175-177
Artaud, Abbot, church of, at Vézelay, 131, 140
Augustine, St., 12, 76, 315
Augustus, Roman Emperor, founds Autun, 146
Aulnay en Saintonge. *See* St. Pierre, Aulnay

Aulnay: abbey church of St. Pierre, 332 *et seq.*; west front of, 335; Psychomachia, 336; south door and Elders of Apocalypse, 338; historiated and floral capitals in nave, 339
Aurillac, monastery of, 243
Autun: Roman origin of town, 146; Roman remains at, 147; Musée Lapidaire and Musée Rollin at, 159. Cathedral of St. Lazare at, 146 *et seq.*; founded by Hugh of Burgundy, 147; legend of Lazarus, Martha and Mary, 148; classical influence in nave, 148; historiated capitals, 149 *et seq.*; tympanum Last Judgment, 153 *et seq.*; Gislebertus, 153, 155, 158; damage done by eighteenth-century Canons, 157 *et seq.*; tomb of St. Lazarus destroyed, 158; north portal and bas-relief of Eve, 160; Abbé Terret on symbolic interpretation of sculptures at, 149, 151, 153; on Stendhal, 157; kinship with Vézelay, 141
Auvergnat churches, 200, 204, 257, 258, 261
Auvergne: school of architecture of, 53; geography and history of, 241-244; type of architecture of, 255, 256; Notre Dame du Port, 256, 258-260; St. Nectaire, 258, 260-263; St. Austremoine, Issoire, 258, 263, 264; Mozac, 264, 265. *See also* 54, 55, 61, 69
Avignon, 371 *et seq.*; building of bridge, 374-377; Notre Dame des Doms, 389
Avitus, Roman Emperor, father-in-law of Sidonius Apollinaris, 246, 247

Baptistery of St. John, Poitiers, 304-306
Baptistery of St. John, Le Puy, 275
Barbarian invasions, 22, 27, 32, 64
Barberini ivory, 343
Bartholomew, St. *See* Iconography
Basilica, 11; plan of early churches, 16; in Syria, Tunis, Algiers, 24; in France, 26, 27; *also* 34, 35
Baudine, St., reliquary bust of, 263, 283
Bayeux: Cathedral, 67, 461, 462; tapestry, 462, 463
Beatus, Abbot of Liebana, manuscript of, 224
Beaulieu, church at, 193, 229; Christ in Glory at, 230, 231
Beauvais, Vincent de, and *Speculum Majus*, 72, 73, 75, 76, 81
Benedict, St.: founder of Benedictine Order, 21; birth of, 103, 105; relics of, at St. Benoît sur Loire, 126. *See also* 29, 32, 33, 46, and Iconography
Benedictines at Cluny, 45, 46, 102 *et seq.*
Benezet, or Petit Benoît, 374 *et seq.*
Bénigne, St., 86; church of, at Dijon, 90 *et seq.*
Benoît, St., d'Aniane, 423, 424
Bernard, St., of Clairvaux, 12, 20; protest against sculpture, 46, 67, 78-81, 441; character and principles of, 109 *et seq.*, preacher of Second Crusade, 129, 130, 135. *Also* 12, 20, 107, 115, 120, 142, 296, 338, 348
Bernard and Bernier, legend of, at Conques, 284
Bernay, monastery of, founded by Duchess Judith, 450-452
Bernon, Abbot of Baume, 103, 104
Berzé-la-Ville, frescoes of, 325, 328
Bestiaries, 76, 80
Bethlehem, nave of church at, 24
Bewcastle, cross-shaft at, 32
Béziers, massacres at, 190
Biscop, Benedict, 32
Boghem, Van, architect of Brou, 167, 168, 173
Book of Kells, 31
Bordeaux, 214, 215, 249
Born, Bertram de, 195
Bourg-en-Bresse, 162-164, 167
Bouvines, battle of, 435
Bradford-on-Avon, church at, 306
Brioude: monastery at, 243; St. Julien, 258; 260
Brive, 229
Brou, 162 *et seq.*; church of, 163, 164; begun by Margaret of Austria, 167; nave, choir, 170; tombs at, 171; apse and chapel of Seven Joys, 172, 173
Brunus, 51; statues of, at St. Gilles, 402
Brutails, Monsieur, 362
Bruys, Pierre de, heresy of, 80, 112, 394
Budge, Sir Ernest Wallis, 14 (footnote)
Burgundy, school of architecture in, 45, 53, 85 *et seq.*
Byzantine influence on fresco painting, 325; question of, in Périgord, 363, 367
Byzantine Psalm Books, 75

Byzantium: seat of Roman Empire, 12, 16, 18, 24, 27; painting and sculpture at, 19; iconoclast dispute at, 28, 41; sculpture at, 58; relics at, 61; Golden Age of, 64, 65

Caen: La Trinité (Abbaye aux Dames), 446, 452, 457; St. Étienne (Abbaye aux Hommes), 446, 448-450, 452, 457 *et seq.*; St. Nicholas, 452; St. Pierre, 457
Cahors, 193; Cathedral of St. Étienne, tympanum of Ascension at, 235, 236
Calvinists (also Huguenots and Protestants) in Southern France, 394, 412; St. Etienne, Périgueux, destroyed by, 364; massacre by, at St. Gilles, 398; William the Conqueror's tomb desecrated by, 459; Matilda's tomb destroyed by, 460
Camargue, 374, 377, 380 *et seq.*
Cambrai, Treaty of, 166
Canons of eighteenth century, damage done by, 131; to Autun, 157 *et seq.*; to Chartres, 470, 476
Cantal, Plomb du, Auvergne, 241
Canterbury Cathedral, building of, by Lanfranc, 42
Carcassonne: massacres at, 190; captured by Black Prince, 292
Carolingian Bibles, 75; sculpture, 59, 69
Carolingian period, influence of Anglo-Saxon and Irish art on, 31
Carolingian Renaissance, 30 *et seq.*
Carpentras, 389
Castel Sarassin, 214
Castelnau, Peter of, 190
Catacombs: early Christians worship in, 7-12, 15; iconography of, 10, 11, 20, 66
Cérisy la Forêt, 452
Chaise Dieu, La, monastery of, 243, 256
Champmol, Chartreuse de, 93-98
Charente, river, 350, 354, 356
Charlemagne: influence of, on culture, 33, 34; Arab Mission to, 63; "A" of, 285, 286; legend of, and St. Gilles, 395, 396
Charles V. of Austria, 165, 168, 170
Charles VIII., 165
Charles Martel, 410; destroys Maguelone, 411, 414; *also* 419
Charles the Simple, King of France, 444
Charles le Téméraire, Duke of Burgundy, death of, 87
Chartres: Cathedral of Notre Dame: 469 *et seq.*; antiquity of foundation, 471; Bishop Fulbert, building of Cathedral, 471-473; stained glass at, 475 *et seq.*; Gothic portals of, 477-479; Royal Portal, 479 *et seq.*; tympanum Christ in Glory, 480; tympana side doors, Ascension and Virgin in Majesty, 481; Black Virgin of crypt, 482; basreliefs Liberal Arts, 483; historiated capitals and frieze at, 484; statues of west door, 485
Châtres, Notre Dame de, 351 *et seq.*
Chauvigny, 143; St. Pierce, 329
Chichester Cathedral, 438
Chinon, Peace of, 300
Christian Church: during first three centuries, 4; at Antioch and Alexandria, 5; in Near and Middle East, 5, 6; in Rome, 7; in Catacombs, 8 *et seq.*; persecution of, by Roman Empire, 8, 13; triumph of, 13; first buildings of, 15
Christianity: in Gaul, 23 *et seq.*; in Gallo-Roman society, 247, 248
Cistercian Order: founded by St. Robert, 46, 79; controversy with Cluniacs, 109
Citeaux, abbey of, 46, 109
Clairvaux, monastery of, founded by St. Bernard, 109
Classical columns and capitals, 69, 149, 308, 387 *et seq.*, 393, 402, 414
Clement of Alexandria, 12, 76
Clement III., Pope, and Frères Hospitaliers Pontifes, 375
Clermont-Ferrand, 200, 241, 242; First Crusade preached by Urban II., 243, 246, 250, 252; situation of, 256, 257
Clovis: conversion of, 25; capture of Toulouse by, 183; victory of, over Alaric at Poitiers, 295; founds Ste. Geneviève, Paris, 26
Cluny, 101 *et seq.*: Benedictines at, 45, 46, 102, 104; organisation of pilgrimages by, 49, 50; impetus of, to intellectual life, 55, 59; centre of culture, 102, 226; foundation of, by William of Aquitaine, 103; great Abbots of, 104; power and independence of, 105-107; controversy with Cistercians, 109-113; abbey church begun by St. Hugh, 114; dimensions of, 101, 114; consecration of, 114; magnificence and relics of, 115; destruction of, 116, 117; capitals of Seasons, Virtues, Musical Tones, Rivers of Para-

dise, Mechanical Arts, 118-124; tympanum of, 227; influence of, on Auvergne, 243, 256; on Moissac, 124, 215; on Languedoc, 220
Colombe, Michel, 167
Comestor, Pierre, *Historia Scholastica*, 73
Conques, 277 *et seq.*; relics of Ste. Foy, 278; church of Ste. Foy, 279; kinship with St. Sernin, Toulouse, and other churches, 200, 280; tympanum of Last Judgment, 280, 281; Treasure of, 279, 382 *et seq.*; Majesté d'Or, 283; "A" of Charlemagne, 285, 286; *also* 50, 126, 263
Constance of Toulouse marries King of France, 184
Constantine, Emperor: Peace of the Church (Edict of Milan), 12, 17; present at Council of Nicæa, 15; transfers seat of Empire to Byzantium, 16; his search for architects, 17; at Arles, 383, 384; equestrian statues of (so called), 343, 344
Constantinople, 17, 65; church of Holy Apostles at, 136
Coorland, Gautier, architect of St. Hilaire, Poitiers, 307
Cordoba, Kalifs of, 59, 62; splendours of, 185
Coulton, Professor, *Five Centuries of Religion*, 79 (footnote), 110, 112
Cross in Christian art, 319, 320
Cross-shafts at Ruthwell, Bewcastle, and Durham, 32
Crusades (First), 46, 130, 243; (Second), 129, 130, 142, 297; (Fourth), 58, 65; Albigensian Crusade, 190. *Also* 47, 185, 292, 296, 365, 366, 444
Crypts: at St. Bénigne, Dijon, 89 *et seq.*; Chartres, 471 *et seq.*; St. Denis, 466; St. Eutrope, Saintes, 358; St. Gilles, 400; Jouarre, 26; St. Laurent, Grenoble, 26; Notre Dame du Port, Clermont-Ferrand, 259; St. Savin, 328; St. Sernin, Toulouse, 204
Ctesiphon, vaults at, compared with St. Philibert of Tournus, 40

Dagobert, 214, 294, 465
Dammartin, Drouet de, 95
Daurade, La, Toulouse, 204 *et seq.*; church of, 206; capitals from, 209
Denderah, monks at, established by Pachomius, 21
Dido, Bishop of Poitiers, 294
Dijon, 85 *et seq.*; church of St Bénigne, 88 *et seq.*; of Notre Dame, 92; of St. Michel, 93; tombs of Philippe le Hardi and Jeans sans Peur at, 93 *et seq.*; Chartreuse de Champmol, 97 *et seq.*; Puits de Moise, 99
Dill, Sir Samuel, 252
Diocletian, Roman Emperor, persecutes Christians, 13, 17
Dodon, builder at Conques, 278
Domed churches of Aquitaine, 361 *et seq.*; theory of origin, 362
Domes on pendentives and on squinches, 361
Dominic, St., campaign of, against Albigenses, 190 *et seq.*
Dordogne, river, 229, 231, 233, 241, 291
Dunstan, St., *Book of Customs*, 313
Durand, Abbot, 216, 222
Durand, Guillaume, *Rational des Divins Offices*, 73
Durand, monk at Cluny, 124
Durham Cathedral, 44; ogival vaults at, 55, 437, 438

Edessa, 4, 5, 15
Edward the Black Prince, 291, 292
Egypt, influence of, 4, 5, 156
Eleanor of Aquitaine, 129, 195; as patron of Troubadours, 196; character of, and marriage with Louis VII., King of France, 297; marriage with Henry II., King of England, 298; death of, 299; *also* 306, 307, 356
Emma, Queen of England, founds St. Hilaire, Poitiers, 307, 446
Enervés of Jumièges, legend of, 454
England: development of Gothic style in, 437, 448, 449; Durham Cathedral, 437, 438; Roche Abbey, Canterbury, Chichester, Lincoln, Westminster Abbey, 438; Winchester, 448
Enlart, Monsieur, 437, 438, 447
Ephesus, Council of, 20
Equestrian statues, known as Constantines, 343, 344
Eucharist: ceremonial of early Christians, 9; evolution of, 20, 21; of Albigenses, 187
Euric, 249, 250, 253
Eutrope, St.: Bishop of Saintes, 356; church of, at Saintes, 357 *et seq.*
Exupère, St., Bishop of Toulouse, 201

Fabrège: Monsieur, 413, 414; Mademoiselle, 416
Fécamp, monastery of, William of Volpiano at, 450
Fête de la Bachelerie, Melle, 345
Folquet of Marseilles, Archbishop of Toulouse, 189
Fountains Abbey, England, 452, 453
Foy, Ste., 126; legends of, and relics of, at Conques, 279, 282, 286
France, Kings of: Charles the Simple, 444; Charles VIII., 165; Louis VII., 129, 297; Louis VIII., 192, 435; Louis XI., 87; Louis XII., 165; Louis XIV., 377, 380; Philip Augustus, 87, 105, 192, 216, 299, 300, 378, 435; Robert, 184
Franks, invasion of Gaul by, 22, 25
Frères Hospitaliers Pontifes, 375-377
Frescoes: at St. Savin, 324 *et seq.*; at Berzé-la-Ville, 328
Fulbert, Bishop of Chartres, 471-473

Gallo-Roman influence on Romanesque art, 60; at Autun, 148; in Auvergne, 255, 263; in Provence, 388, 390, 402, 404
Gallo-Roman period in Auvergne, 244 *et seq.*
Garonne, river, 181, 182, 214, 241, 289, 291
Gaul: Franks in, 22; Christianity in, 23; Merovingian churches in, 26; monastic system in, 29; classical revival in, 34
Gauzon, architect of Cluny, 114
Gayard, Raymond, architect St. Sernin, Toulouse, 201-203
Gellone, abbey of. *See* St. Guilhem le Désert
Geoffrey, Count of Poitiers, 357
Gérard de Blaye, Bishop of Angoulême, 347, 348, 364
Gérard de Roussillon, founder of Vézelay, 127, 128
German school of Romanesque architecture, 39, 53
Germigny-des-Prés, 26, 37, 306
Gilabertus at Toulouse, 51, 205, 206
Gilles, St.: legend of, 395 *et seq.*; town and church of, 397 *et seq.*
Gislebertus, sculptor at Autun, 153-155, 157, 161
Glaber, Raoul, 38, 184
Gothic architecture: a natural evolution from Romanesque, 45, 65, 434; Gothic transition, 431 *et seq.*; importance of Normandy and Île de France in evolution of new forms, 431; no antagonism between two systems, 45, 55, 434; application of new methods by Suger at St. Denis, 466; parallel developments in England, 437, 438; influence of French Gothic in English cathedrals, 438
Goths, 22, 36
Greek sculpture, influence of, on Romanesque art, 60
Gregory VII. (Hildebrand), Pope, trained at Cluny, 105
Gregory, St., 32, 65
Gregory, St., of Nazianzus, illuminated manuscript of, 136
Gregory of Tours, 26, 324
Grenoble, crypt of St. Laurent at, 26
Guilhem le Désert, St., 421 *et seq.*

Haroun-al-Raschid, Mission to Charlemagne, 63
Helena, St., pilgrimage to Jerusalem, 20
Henry II. of England, 291; marries Eleanor of Aquitaine, 298; character of, 298, 299; Anglo-Norman administrators of, in Poitou, 300, 306, 307, 320, 356
Hérault, river, 378, 419, 420, 424
Hezelon, architect of Abbey Church, Cluny, 114
Hilaire, St.: Bishop of Poitiers, 293, 294; relics of, sent to Le Puy, 272
Historiated capitals. *See* Romanesque sculpture
Holy Apostles, church of, at Constantinople, mosaic in, 136
Honorius, Roman Emperor, transfers seat of Empire from Rome to Ravenna, 17
Honorius d'Autun, *Speculum Ecclesiæ* and *Bestiaries*, 73, 75, 76
Huerta, La, Juan, at Dijon, 96
Hugh, Duke of Burgundy, founds Autun Cathedral, 147
Hugh, St.: Abbot of Cluny, 104, 108; begins building of basilica, 114; also 124
Hugo, Victor, quoted, 43
Huguenots. *See* Calvinists
Hundred Years' War, 301, 435

Iconoclast dispute, 28, 31, 32, 65
Île de France (Royal Domain): influence of, on Gothic transition, 431, 435, 464, 467, 479; on development ogival vault, 437, 447; *also* 53, 55, 213, 367, 456

Innocent II., Pope: consecration of Autun, Cluny and Vézelay by, 140, 141; at Cluny, 114; at Vézelay, 141; at Autun, 148, 227
Innocent III., Pope, persecution of Albigenses by, 189-191
Inquisition, origin of, 191, 192
Irish culture, influence of, in Europe, 29 *et seq.*, 66, 294, 295; pedagogues at Charlemagne's court, 34
Isaiah. *See* Iconography
Isaure, Clemence, and Jeux Floraux, 197
Issoire, church of St. Austremoine, 258, 260, 263 *et seq.*
Italy: workmen from, 27, 32; sculpture in, 31, 32; workmen from, at St. Bénigne, 89; debt of French sculpture to, 225, 226; influence of, on St. Gilles, 404, 405

Jean aux Belles Mains, 300
Jean de Bourbon, Abbot of Cluny, 118
Jean de Marville at Champmol, 95
Jean sans Peur, Duke of Burgundy, 87; tomb of, 93, 96
Jerusalem, 4, 5, 20; pilgrimages to, 47, 48
Jeux Floraux, Academy of, 196, 197
Jews, antipathy to plastic art, 1, 3, 5, 12, 14 (footnote), 62
John of Aragon, marries Margaret of Austria, 165
Jongleurs, 193 *et seq.*
Jouarre, crypt of, 26
Joubin, Monsieur André, *Revue Archéologique*, 425
Judith, Duchess of Normandy, founds Bernay, 450, 451
Julian, Roman Emperor, 27
Julius Cæsar, 242, 243, 355, 385
Jumièges, abbey of, 448 *et seq.*
Justinian, Roman Emperor, conquest of Italy, 17

Kingsley Porter, Mr., 42 (footnote), 224, 388

Labours of the Months. *See* Iconography
La Charité-sur-Loire, 115
Lahondes, Monsieur de, 212
Lanfranc, Abbot of Bec, 42, 436, 445-447, 457
Languedoc, school of, 40, 70, 213, 224, 226, 350, 392, 456. Two divisions of, 181, 182, 387. Annexed by France, 192. *Also* 183, 186, 189, 190, 192, 229, 285, 387; *also* 378 *et seq.*
Langue d'Oc, 183, 193, 295, 300, 356, 371
Langue d'Œil, 295, 300, 356
Lasteyrie, Count Robert de, *Architecture Religieuse en France a l'Époque Romane; Études sur la Sculpture Française au Moyen Age*, 24, 37, 42, 91, 135, 140, 290, 308, 329, 346, 388, 390, 399, 461
La Trinité (Abbaye aux Dames), Caen, 446, 452, 457, 459 *et seq.*
Lazarus, St.: reputed landing of, near Arles, 24, 126; relics of, at Autun, 126, 148; tomb of, at Autun, 158. *See also* Iconography
Lentheric, Monsieur, *Les Villes Mortes du Golfe du Lion*, 23, 382
Leo the Isaurian, Roman Emperor, 28, 65
Le Puy: town of, 266 *et seq.*; Cathedral of, 269 *et seq.*; west porch of, 271; baptistery of, 275; Cufic lettering on doors of, 68, 272; Porche du For, 274; cloister of, 275; St. Michel d'Aiguilhe at, 276
Lerins Monastery, 30, 252
Limagne, Auvergne, 242
Lincoln Cathedral, 438
Lions, Gulf of, 378, 379
Lions (as bases for columns), 393, 401, 404
Liturgical drama, 313, 337
Loire, river, 24, 25, 54, 55, 201, 267 *et seq.*, 291, 367, 432
Lombard influences, 39, 40, 89, 225, 226, 404
Lot, river, 231, 235, 241, 291
Louis VII., King of France, 129, 297
Louis VIII., 192, 435
Louis XI., 87
Louis XII., 165
Louis XIV. and Camargue, 377, 380
Lyons: inscription at, 24 (footnote); church described by Sidonius, 251; *also* 245, 247, 249

Mâcon, 101, 116, 117
Maestri Comacini, 42, 226
Maguelone, La, 408 *et seq.*
Maguelone, Cathedral of St. Pierre, 411, 413 *et seq.*; sculptures of west door, 415
Mâle, Émile, Monsieur, *L'Art Religieux du 12ième Siècle* and *L'Art Religieux du 13ième Siècle*, 72; references to, 49, 77, 79, 95, 136, 151, 200, 224, 312, 314, 326, 350, 394, 427, 467

Marcus Aurelius, 24, 343
Margaret of Austria: story of, 164 *et seq.*; founds church at Brou, 167 *et seq.*
Margaret of Bourbon, 167, 171
Margaret of Flanders, Duchess of Burgundy, 94, 99
Marguerite de Bavière, Duchess of Burgundy, 96
Marignan, Monsieur, 400, 403
Marjorian, Roman Emperor, 247
Marquet de Vasaelot, Monsieur, 67, 274
Martel, Charles: victory of, at Tours, 28; destroys Maguelone, 411; grandfather of St. Guilhem, 421
Martel, Geoffrey, Count of Anjou, founds Ste. Marie des Dames, Saintes, 359
Martin, monk and sculptor at Autun, 158, 161
Martin, St., of Tours: mission of, to France, 24, 50; at Poitiers, 293, 294; basilica of, 35, 50, 251; later church of, 200, 201, 280
Mary Magdalene, relics of, at Cluny, 115; at Vézelay, 126, 127
Mass: evolution of, 9, 21; symbolic importance of, 74; connection with Mystery Plays, 312, 313
Massif Central, 241, 277, 290
Matilda of Flanders, 445, 446, 462; builds Abbaye aux Dames, Caen, 459 *et seq.*
Maupas (Bonpas), abbey of, 376
Maximilian I., 164, 166
Mayeul, St., Abbot of Cluny, 88, 104, 225
Melgueil, Pontius de, Abbot of Cluny, 107
Melle, 341 *et seq.*; St. Hilaire, 341 *et seq.*; equestrian statue at, 343, 344; St. Pierre, 344, 345
Merimée, Prosper, 324, 328
Merovingian art and churches, 22, 25, 26, 27, 29, 35, 62
Mert, Conrad, 168
Mesopotamia, 5, 19, 37
Michael the Drunkard restores images, 65
Michael, St., d'Aiguilhe, Le Puy, rock and church of, 269, 276
Michel, Monsieur André, Histoire de l'Art, 67 (footnote), 95, 133, 135, 217, 346, 437, 461
Milan, Edict of, 12. *See* Peace of the Church
Mimey and Malley, 132; restorations in Auvergne, 261, 263; at Le Puy, 272, 273
Moissac, 214 *et seq.*; foundation of, 214; affiliation of, to Cluny, 215; Durand, Abbot of, 124, 216, 222; Bertrand de Montaigu, Abbot of, 216, 217, 223, 224; Ansquitil, Abbot of, 216; Roger, Abbot of, 217; cloister of, 216, 221-224; porch of, 217; tympanum of Christ in Glory, 218, 219; trumeau, 219; bas-reliefs, side walls, 219-221; historiated capitals of cloister, 222, 223; Cufic lettering at, 222; link with Toulouse, 224; importance of sculpture at, 224-228. *See also* Iconography
Molesmes, St. Robert, Abbot of, 109
Monasticism: rise of, in Egypt, 21, 29; growth of, in France, 26, 103 *et seq.*; in Ireland, 29; at Lerins, 30, 31, 46, 47, 252; influence of, on education and art, 51, 58, 74, 435, 436; at Cluny, 102 *et seq.*; struggles of, with communes, 108; debt of civilisation to, 436
Montaigu, Bertrand de, Abbot of Moissac, 216, 217, 223, 224
Mont Anis, Le Puy, 266, 269
Mont Dore, Auvergne, 241
Monte Cassino, 105, 126
Montereau, Pierre de, reconstructs St. Denis, 466
Montfort, Simon de: campaign against Albigenses, 190 - 192; Moissac captured by, 215
Montpellier, 181, 182, 406 *et seq.*
Montrand, Archbishop Raymond de, 392
Monturier: Antoine le, completes tombs of Dukes of Burgundy, 96
Moyria, M. G. de, *L'Église de Brou*, 175
Mozac: monastery of, 243, 260; church and sculptures at, 264, 265
Mystery Plays, 311 *et seq.*, 337, 391

Napoleon, 117, 183, 463
Narbonne, Visigoths at, 249
Nicæa, Council of, 15
Nicholas, St.: at Brou, 170; chapel of, at Avignon, 377
Nicomedia, Diocletian's capital at, 17
Nimes, barrel vault at, 41
Nisibis, 4, 5
Nodet, Victor, 171 (footnote)
Noguès, Monsieur l'Abbé, 344

Normandy, Dukes of: Rollo, 444; Richard the Fearless, 444; Richard II., 450; Robert I., 445; William the Conqueror, 445 *et seq.*
Normandy: early history of, 443, 444, 447, 448; under William the Conqueror, 445, 446
Norman school of architecture, 53, 54; influence on Gothic transition, 431-442, 447, 448
Notre Dame, church of, at Dijon, 92, 93
Notre Dame de Mont Cornadore, statue of, 263
Notre Dame des Doms, Avignon, 389
Notre Dame du Port, Clermont-Ferrand, 257 *et seq.*; chevet and nave, 258; capitals, 259, 260; *also* 200, 281
Notre Dame la Grande, Poitiers: façade of, 310 *et seq.*; frieze of, and Mystery Play at, 315 *et seq.*

Odalric, Abbot of Conques, 279
Odilon, St., of Cluny, 46, 104, 120, 215
Odo, Bishop of Bayeux, 462
Œcumenical Councils, 17
Orcival, church at, 258
Oriental influences: on Rome prior to Christian era, 7, 11; on Early Church from Egypt, Syria, Mesopotamia, Armenia, Persia, 4-6; on Church from sixth to eighth centuries, 17; on Byzantium, 18-21; on Merovingian churches, 29; on Western Europe, 28; on Irish art, 30, 31; on Carolingian art, 34; transmitted by Goths to Northern Europe, 36, 37. On Romanesque sculpture, decorative themes and ideas from Persia, Syria, Egypt and Middle East, 57, 59; from Sassanians, 61; from Copts, 61; from Byzantium, 62; from Arabs, 62. Animal prototypes from Assyria and Chaldea, 66; Mohammedan and Arabic influences, 67, 68, 209. On French churches, at Autun, 150; at Moissac, 219, 222-223; at Souillac, 233; at Le Puy, 272, 274; at Ste. Radegonde, Poitiers, 318; at St. Savin 327; at Aulnay, 335, 339, 340; at Saintes, 358, 359; at Bayeux, 67, 461; at Bernay, 452. Question of, on domed churches, Aquitaine, 362 *et seq.*
Origen, 76

Pachomius, 21
Palavas, 408
Paschal II., Pope, 105
Pater, Walter, 469
Patiens, Bishop of Lyons, 253
Patrick, St., 29, 30, 294
Paule, 21
Pendentives (domes on), 361 *et seq.*; at Angoulême, 347; at Châtres, 352; at St. Front, 364
Peninsular War, 183
Périgord, domed churches in, 361, 367
Périgueux: St. Front, 362 *et seq.*; St. Etienne, 364, 366
Persia: renaissance of art in, 61; Arab conquest of, 62
Peter of Castelnau, 190, 398, 400
Peter the Hermit, 46
Peter the Venerable, 104, 106, 109, 111-113, 128, 400
Philibert, St., 452, 454
Philibert of Savoy, 165, 167; tomb of, at Brou, 169 *et seq.*
Philip Augustus, King of France, 87, 105, 192, 216, 299, 300, 378, 435
Philippe le Bon, Duke of Burgundy, 87
Philippe le Hardi, Duke of Burgundy, 87; tomb of, 93 *et seq.*, 99
Physiologus, 76
Picardy, 431, 437
Pilgrimages: stimulus of, to communication, 47; to church building, 48, 49, 61
Pius II., Pope, dissolves Order Frères Hospitaliers Pontifes, 377
Plantagenets in Poitou, 291, 296-301, 306, 318, 356
Poitiers, 302; Roman origin of, 303, 304; Merovingian monuments at, Hypogée Martyrium, 304; Baptistery of St. John, 26, 305. St. Hilaire: founded by Emma, 307 *et seq.*; restoration of, by Abadie, 308; domes of, compared with those of Le Puy, 272. Notre Dame la Grande, 310-317; façade of, 311; Mystery Plays at, 312; Drama of the Passion, Drama of Prophets, 314; iconography of frieze, 316. Ste. Radegonde, 318. St. Porchaire, 318. Cathedral of St. Pierre, 318; twelfth-century window in chevet of, 319.
Poitou, 289, 290; Plantagenets in, 291, 296-301; centre of Roman culture, 292, 293; relations with Ireland, 294, 295; Guilhems in, 295, 296

Poitou and Aquitaine school of architecture, 53
Pons of Vézelay, Abbot, 128
Pontius de Melgueil, Abbot of Cluny, 108, 109
Popes: Alexander III., 416; Clement III., 375; Gregory VII. (Hildebrand), 105; Innocent II., 114, 140, 141, 148, 227; Innocent III., 189-191; Paschal II., 105; Pius II., 377; Urban II., 46, 105, 114, 210, 243, 400, 411; Urban V., 105
Porée, Monsieur le Chanoine, 450, 452
Prophets of Old Law (Daniel, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Moses, Zechariah): Dijon, Puits de Moise, 98. *See also* Iconography
Protestants. *See* Calvinists
Provençal architecture, 388 *et seq.*
Provence: First Roman province colonised in Gaul, 371; beauty of, 372; Gallo-Roman tradition in, 55, 388, 402, 404; classical influence in, 60, 68, 69, 387-390, 392, 393, 402, 404. Romanesque churches of, 387-390; Lombard influence in Provençal architecture, 374, 387-390, 404; Counts of Provence, 193; Troubadours and Jongleurs in, 193-195. *Also* 40, 42, 49, 50, 53, 54, 69, 87, 126, 129, 182
Psautier de Paris and capital of Magi, Autun, 152
Puente la Reina, junction of pilgrimage routes, 49
Puits de Moise, at Champmol, 98, 99
Puy de Dome, Auvergne, 241
Pyrenees, 49, 69, 185

Quinet, Edgar, and Brou, 175, 176

Ravenna: seat of Western Empire transferred there from Rome, 17; splendour of, in sixth century, 24; throne of Maximian at, 32; church of St. Vitale at, 37; *also* 89
Raymond II., Count of Toulouse, 185
Raymond VI., Count of Toulouse, does penance for murder of Peter of Castelnau before Portal St. Gilles, 398, 400. *See* Counts of Toulouse
Reformation, 99, 109, 169, 175
Relics: importance of, 34, 48, 50; frauds and disputes concerned with: at Vézelay, 126-129; at Compostela, at Autun, at St. Benoît sur Loire, at St. Maximin, 126; at Conques, 279; at St. Guilhem le Désert, 424
Reliquary busts: in Auvergne, 263; St. Baudine and Notre Dame de Mont Cornadore at St. Nectaire, 263; Majesté d'Or at Conques, 283
Renaissance: effect of, on symbolism, 74; change in values due to, 98, 99, 169, 174, 175
Revoil, Monsieur, 387, 388
Revolution, French, destruction caused by: at Dijon, 89, 91, 95, 96, 98; at Cluny, 101, 116, 117; at Vézelay, 134; at Tours, 200; at Toulouse, 203, 204; at Moissac, 224; at Le Puy, 268; at Poitiers, 308; at St. Gilles, 399; at Jumièges, 453; at Caen, 459, 460; at St. Denis, 465; at Chartres, 470, 482; revolutionaries outwitted at Conques, 279; Brou saved from revolutionaries, 172; at Clermont-Ferrand, 250; at Limoges, 337
Rhine, river, 22, 25, 37, 39, 293
Rhone Valley: Roman culture in, 23; early Christian settlements in, 24; watershed between Rhone and Loire, 268; bridges across, at Avignon, 375; at La Croisière, 377; Rhone Delta, 378 *et seq.*
Richard Cœur de Lion, 194, 215, 291
Richelieu, Cardinal, destroys Maguelone, 412, 413
Riquier, Giraut, of Narbonne, 196
Robert, King of France, marries Constance of Toulouse, 184
Robert, sculptor of Notre Dame du Port, 260
Robert, St., Abbot of Molesmes, founds Abbey of Citeaux, 46, 109, 110
Roche Abbey, Yorkshire, 438
Rocher Corneille, Le Puy, Virgin, on, 266, 268, 269
Rochias, Abbé, St. Nectaire, 261, 262
Rodrigo de Luna, Anti-Pope, besieged at Avignon, 376
Roger II., Count of Toulouse, 188
Roger, Abbot of Moissac, capitals and statue of, in cloister, 217
Roger, Pierre, Bishop of Toulouse, 201
Rollin, Cardinal, Autun, 148, 158, 159
Rollo, Duke of Normandy, 444
Roman Emperors: Avitus, 246, 247;

Anthemius, 247; Augustus, 146; Constantine, 12, 15, 16, 343, 383; Diocletian, 13, 17; Honorius, 17; Julian, 27; Justinian, 17; Leo the Isaurian, 28, 65; Marjorian, 247; Romulus Augustulus, fall of, 244; Theodosius, 17; Valerian, 355
Roman remains: at Autun, 146; at Saintes, 355; at Arles, 383; at Poitiers, 303
Romanesque Sculpture:
Archivolts and Arcades (Decorated): Angoulême, St. Pierre, 349; Aulnay, 325, 338; Autun, 157; Bayeux, 461; Caen, Abbaye aux Dames, 459; Chartres, 481, 483; Châtres, 352; St. Georges de Boscherville, 455; Melle, St. Hilaire, 342; St. Pierre, 345, 309 *et seq.*; Poitiers, Notre Dame la Grande, 311; Saintes, St. Eutrope, 357; Ste. Marie des Dames, 360; Vézelay, 135, 138
Capitals, Birds, Beasts, Monsters, Mythical: Autun, 149, 150; Bernay, 452; Caen, Abbaye aux Dames, 459; Chauvigny, St. Pierre, 329; Dijon, St. Bénigne, 90; Moissac, 216, 223; Mozac, 256; St. Nectaire, 262; Saintes, St. Eutrope, 358; Toulouse, St. Sernin, 202, 210
Capitals, Braided Scrolls, and Arabesques: Moissac, 223; Normandy, 449; Saintes, St. Eutrope, 358; Toulouse Museum, 210, 212
Capitals, Foliage: Aulnay, 339; Autun, 153; Cluny, 118; Saintes, St. Eutrope, 358; Toulouse Museum, 208; Vézelay, 145
Capitals, Historiated: Aulnay, 339, Autun, 149 *et seq.*; Clermont-Ferrand, Notre Dame du Port, 259; Cluny, 118 *et seq.*, 227; Issoire, St. Austremoine, 264; Mozac, 265; Poitiers, Ste. Radegonde, 318; St. Georges de Boscherville, 455; St. Nectaire, 261, 262; Saintes, St. Eutrope, 358; Toulouse Museum: from St. Sernin, 205; from St. Etienne, 207; from La Daurade, 210 *et seq.*; Vézelay, 139 *et seq.*
Cloisters: Arles, 390; Elne, 221; Le Puy, 275; Moissac, 221; Toulouse, St. Sernin (destroyed), 205; St. Etienne (destroyed), 205; La Daurade (destroyed), 206 *et seq.*
Romanesque Sculpture (*continued*):
Façades and Porches: Angoulême, St. Pierre, 349; Arles, 392; Aulnay, 335 *et seq.*; Autun, 153; Brou, 170; Caen, Abbaye aux Dames, 460; Abbaye aux Hommes, 458; Champmol, 99; Chartres, Royal Portal, 473, 479 *et seq.*; South Portal, 478; North Portal, 478, 479; Châtres, 352; Conques, 280; Jumièges, 453; Maguelone, 415; Moissac, 215, 217 *et seq.*; Poitiers, Notre Dame la Grande, 311; Provence, 389 *et seq.*; St. Denis, 466; St. Georges de Boscherville, 455; St. Gilles, 401; Vézelay, 132 *et seq.*
Friezes: Arles, 392; Chartres, 484; St. Gilles, 401, 403; Poitiers, Notre Dame, 311, 315 *et seq.*
Tympana: Angoulême, Twelve Apostles, 349; Arles, Christ in Glory, 392; Aulnay, Christ in Glory, Execution of St Peter, 335; Autun, Last Judgment, 153 *et seq.*; Beaulieu, Last Judgment, 230; Brou, 170; Cahors, Cathedral, Ascension, 235; Chartres, Christ in Glory, 480; Ascension, 481; Virgin in Majesty, 481; Clermont-Ferrand, Notre Dame du Port, Christ in Glory, 260; Cluny, Christ in Glory (destroyed), 114, 227; Conques, Last Judgment, 280; Dijon, Last Supper and Christ in Glory, from St Bénigne, 91, 92 (Museum Dijon); Maguelone, Christ in Glory, 415; Moissac, Vision of Apocalypse, 216, 218 *et seq.*; St. Denis, Last Judgment, 467; St. Gilles, Adoration of Magi, Christ on Cross, 403; Toulouse, St. Sernin, Ascension, 203; Vézelay, Narthex Central Portal, Pentecost, 133 *et seq.*; North Portal, Emmaus, 138; South Portal, Story of Virgin, 138
Iconography of:
Abraham: Arles, 392; Cluny, 118; Conques, 281; Moissac, 220
Absalom: Vézelay, 144
Adam and Eve: Cluny, 118; Clermont - Ferrand (Notre Dame du Port), 259; Poitiers (Notre Dame la Grande), 315; (Ste. Radegonde), 318; Vézelay, 140

Romanesque Sculpture (*continued*):
Iconography of (*continued*):
Agag: Vézelay, 143
Agony in Garden: Toulouse Museum (Daurade), 211
Andrew, St.: Arles, 393; Autun, 158; Brou, 170; Toulouse (St. Etienne), 206
Anna and Joachim: Chartres (West Portal), 484
Annunciation: Autun, 151; Chartres (West Portal), 483, 484; Chauvigny (St. Pierre), 330; Moissac, 220; Poitiers (Notre Dame la Grande), 317; St. Georges de Boscherville, 455; Toulouse Museum, 213; Vézelay, 138
Apostles: Angoulême, 349; Arles, 391; Cahors, 236; Chartres (West Portal), 481; Moissac (Cloister), 222; Montpellier Museum, 427; Toulouse Museum (St. Etienne), 205; Vézelay, 134
Ark on Ararat: Autun, 151
Ascension: Angoulême, 349; Arles, 391; Cahors, 236; Chartres (West Portal), 481, 484; Toulouse Museum (Daurade), 211; Toulouse (St. Sernin), 203; Vézelay, 138
Avarice: Autun, 155; Moissac, 220
Baptism: Chartres (West Portal), 484
Bartholomew, St.: Arles, 393; St. Gilles, 402
Baudine, St.: St. Nectaire, 263
Bear Hunt: Toulouse Museum (Daurade), 210
Benedict, St.: Vézelay, 143
Birds, Beasts, Scrolls: Moissac, 223; Toulouse, 210
Cain, Death of: Autun, 151; Vézelay, 141
Carrying of the Cross: St. Gilles, 403
Catharine, St., Champmol, 80, 99
Christ among Doctors: Chartres (West Portal), 484
Christ, Apparition of, to Magdalene: Toulouse Museum (Daurade), 211
Christ before Pilate: St. Gilles, 403
Christ in Glory: Angoulême, 349; Arles, 392; Aulnay, 335; Chartres (West Portal), 474, 480; Cluny (tympanum, destroyed), 114; Clermont-Ferrand (Notre Dame du Port), 260; Dijon (Museum), 91; Maguelone, 415; Melle (St. Pierre), 345; Moissac, 218 *et seq.*; Poitiers (Notre Dame la Grande), 311; Le Puy (St. Michel d'Aiguilhe), 276
Christ on the Cross: St. Gilles, 403; St. Guilhem le Désert, 427
Classical Sages: Chartres (West Portal), 483
Daniel: Dijon (Puits de Moïse), 98
Daniel in Lions' Den: Moïssac, 224; Poitiers (Ste. Radegonde), 318; Saintes (St. Eutrope, 358; Toulouse Museum (Daurade), 210
David: Dijon (Puits de Moïse), 99; Toulouse Museum (St. Etienne), 207
David and Bathsheba: Vézelay, 142
David and Goliath: Vézelay, 141
Descent from Cross: Toulouse Museum (Daurade), 211
Descent into Hell: Toulouse Museum (Daurade), 211
Descent of Holy Spirit: Toulouse Museum (Daurade), 212; Vézelay tympanum, 133
Dives and Lazarus: Moissac, 220
Elders of the Apocalypse: Aulnay, 338; Autun, 156; Chartres (West Portal), 481; Moissac, 218; Montpellier Museum, 427; Le Puy (St. Michel d'Aiguilhe), 276; St. Denis, 467; St. Georges de Boscherville, 455
Entry into Jerusalem: Chartres (West Portal), 484; St. Gilles, 403
Eugenia, St.: Vézelay, 143
Eve, Bas-Relief of: Autun, 161
Ezekiel: Poitiers (Notre Dame la Grande), 315
Flagellation: St. Gilles, 403; Toulouse, 211
Flight into Egypt: Autun, 152; Chartres (West Portal), 485; Moissac, 221
Foliage and Mythical Beasts: Toulouse Museum (Daurade), 210

Romanesque Sculpture (*continued*):
Iconography of (*continued*):
Foy, Ste.: Conques, 279
Gabriel, St.: Chauvigny (St. Pierre), 330; Clermont-Ferrand (Notre Dame du Port), 259; Poitiers, 316; Toulouse Museum, 213
Golden Calf: Vézelay, 141
Goliath, Defeat of: Autun, 157
Habbakuk: Poitiers (Ste. Radegonde), 318
Hagar, Banishment of: Autun, 156
Herod's Feast: St. Georges de Boscherville, 455; Toulouse Museum (St. Etienne), 209
Holy Children in Furnace: Autun, 151
Holy Innocents: Autun, 151; Saintes, 360
Holy Women at Tomb: Arles, 391; Issoire, 264; St. Gilles, 403; St. Nectaire, 262; Toulouse Museum (Daurade), 211
Hubert, St.: Vézelay, 141
Isaac: Arles, 392
Isaac, Sacrifice of: Souillac, 232
Isaiah: Clermont-Ferrand (Notre Dame du Port), 260; Dijon (Puits de Moïse), 99; Moissac, 219; Poitiers (Notre Dame la Grande), 315; Souillac, 234
Jacob: Arles, 392; Autun, 150
Jacob and Angel: Vézelay, 141
James, St.: Arles (St. Trophime), 391, 393; St. Gilles, 402
James, St. (Minor): Arles (St. Trophime), 393; St. Gilles, 402
Jeremiah: Dijon (Puits de Moïse), 99; Poitiers (Notre Dame la Grande), 315
Jerome, St., and Lion: Autun, 157
Job: Toulouse Museum (Daurade), 212
John the Baptist: Clermont-Ferrand (Notre Dame du Port), 260; Toulouse Museum (St. Étienne), 209; Vézelay, 133
John, St.: Arles (St. Trophime), 391, 392; Aulnay, 335; Dijon Museum, 91; St. Gilles, 403; St. Guilhem le Désert, 427; Toulouse Museum (Daurade), 211
Romanesque Sculpture (*continued*):
Iconography of (*continued*):
Joseph, St.: Autun, 152; Chartres, 484; Clermont-Ferrand (Notre Dame du Port), 259; Moissac, 221; Poitiers (Notre Dame la Grande), 317; Vézelay, 138
Judas: Chartres (West Portal), 484; Dijon Museum, 92; St. Gilles, 403; St. Nectaire, 262; Toulouse Museum (Daurade), 211
Judith and Holofernes: Vézelay, 144
Kings and Queens: Chartres (West Portal), 484 *et seq.*
Labours of the Months: Aulnay, 336; Autun, 157; Chartres (West Portal), 481; Cluny, 122; Vézelay, 135
Last Judgment: Arles, 392; Autun, 154; Beaulieu, 230; Conques, 280; St. Denis, 467; St. Nectaire, 262
Last Supper: Chartres (West Portal), 484; Dijon Museum, 91; Issoire, 264; Toulouse Museum (Daurade), 211
Lazarus, Raising of: St. Gilles, 403
Lazarus, Story of: Autun, 158; Vézelay, 141
Leviathan: Autun, 156; Conques, 281
Liberal Arts (Seven): Chartres (West Portal), 483
Lust (Serpent and Woman): Autun, 155; Moissac, 220; Vézelay, 141
Magi: Autun, 151; Chauvigny (St. Pierre), 330; Clermont-Ferrand (Notre Dame du Port), 260; Moissac, 221; St. Gilles, 403; Vézelay, 138
Mark, St.: Vézelay, 133
Martha and Mary: Autun, 158; St. Gilles, 403
Martin, St., of Tours: Angoulême, 349; Vézelay, 143
Mary of Egypt: Toulouse Museum (St. Étienne), 208
Mary Magdalene: Toulouse Museum (Daurade), 211
Massacre of Innocents: Autun, 151; Saintes (Ste. Marie des Dames), 360
Matthew, St.: Arles, 391; St. Gilles, 402
Mechanical Arts: Cluny, 122

Romanesque Sculpture (*continued*):
Iconography of (*continued*):
Michael, St.: Autun, 156; Chauvigny (St Pierre), 330; Conques, 281; St. Nectaire, 262; Toulouse Museum (Daurade), 210
Miller and Mill: Vézelay, 144
Money Changers at Temple: St. Gilles, 403
Moses: Autun, 151; Dijon (Puits de Moïse), 99; Poitiers (Notre Dame la Grande), 315; Vézelay, 144
Musical Tones: Cluny, 120
Nativity: Chartres (West Portal), 483, 484; Moissac, 220; Poitiers (Notre Dame la Grande), 317; Vézelay, 138
Nebuchadnezzar: Poitiers (Notre Dame la Grande), 315
Nicholas: St. Brou, 170
Passion, Story of: Toulouse Museum (Daurade), 210
Paul, St.: Arles (St. Trophime), 391, 393; Brou, 170; Maguelone, 415; St. Gilles, 402; Toulouse (St. Étienne), 206; Vézelay, 135
Paul, St., and St. Anthony in Desert: Vézelay, 142
Personages of Old Law: St. Denis, 468
Peter, St.: Angoulême, 349; Arles, 391, 392; Aulnay, 335; Autun, 158; Brou, 170; Conques, 281; Maguelone, 415; Moissac, 219; St. Gilles, 402, 403; Toulouse Museum (St. Étienne), 206; Vézelay, 135
Philip, St.: Arles, 393
Presentation in Temple: Autun, 157; Chartres, 484; Clermont-Ferrand (Notre Dame du Port), 260; Moissac, 221
Resurrection: Arles, 391; Toulouse Museum (Daurade), 211
Rider on White Horse: St. Nectaire, 262
Rivers of Paradise: Autun, 152; Cluny, 118; Toulouse Museum (Daurade), 210; Vézelay, 141
Samson and Delilah: Aulnay, 339
Seasons and Virtues: Cluny, 119
Simon Magus: Autun, 150
Stephen, St.: Arles, 391; Cahors, 236
Romanesque Sculpture (*continued*):
Iconography of (*continued*):
Symbols of Evangelists: (Sacred Beasts), 76; Chartres, 480; Cluny, 114; Maguelone, 415; Moissac, 218; Le Puy (St. Michel d'Aiguilhe), 276
Syren and Centaurs: Toulouse Museum (Daurade), 210
Temptation in Wilderness: Autun, 150; Chartres (West Portal), 484
Theophilus, Legend of: Souillac, 233
Thomas, St.: Arles, 391; St. Gilles, 402; Toulouse Museum (Daurade), 211, (St. Étienne), 206
Transfiguration: St. Nectaire, 202
Tree of Jesse: Poitiers (Notre Dame la Grande), 315
Trophime, St.: Arles, 391, 393
Vintage: Vézelay, 144
Virgin: Aulnay, 335; Autun, 151, 152, 155; Brou, 173; Cahors, 236; Chartres, 481, 482, 484; Clermont-Ferrand (Notre Dame du Port), 259; Conques, 281, 285; Le Puy, 266; Moissac, 221; Poitiers (Notre Dame la Grande), 317; St. Georges de Boscherville, 455; St. Gilles, 403; St. Guilhem le Désert, 427; Souillac, 234; Toulouse (St. Sernin), 203; Toulouse Museum, 207, 212, 213
Virgin in Majesty: Chartres (West Portal), 481
Virtues and Vices (Psychomachia): Aulnay, 336; Clermont-Ferrand (Notre Dame du Port), 260
Visitation: Chartres (West Portal), 483, 484; Moissac, 220; Poitiers (Notre Dame la Grande), 315; St. Georges de Boscherville, 455; Vézelay, 138
Walk to Emmaus: Arles, 391; Chartres (West Portal), 485; Toulouse Museum (Daurade), 211; Vézelay, 138
Warrior and Syren: Autun, 150
Washing of Feet: Toulouse Museum (Daurade), 211
Weighing of Souls: Autun, 156; Conques, 281; St. Nectaire, 262; Saintes (St. Eu-

Romanesque Sculpture (*continued*):
Iconography of (*continued*):
trope), 358; Toulouse Museum (Daurade), 210
Wise and Foolish Virgins: Aulnay, 337; Toulouse Museum (St. Etienne), 208
Wolf and Crane: Autun, 156
Woman taken in Adultery: Vézelay, 142
Zacharias, Story of: Clermont-Ferrand (Notre Dame du Port), 259
Zechariah: Dijon (Puits de Moïse), 98
Zodiac, Signs of: Aulnay, 336; Autun, 157; Chartres (West Portal), 481; Issoire, 263; Melle (St. Pierre), 345; Vézelay, 135
Rome: influence of, on early Christian Church, 4, 5, 7, 8, 11; attitude of, towards early Christians, 8, 13; Catacombs, 8-11; transfer of capital to Byzantium, 17; fall of Western Empire, 18, 22, 249 *et seq.*; fragments of Byzantine art at, 19
Romulus Augustulus, Roman Emperor, fall of, 244
Roome, Jean van, designs statues at Brou, 168
Rouen, 448, 449
Roussillon, Gérard de, founds Vézelay, 127
Royal domain. *See* Ile de France, 431, 435, 464
Russia, Southern: Christianised from Eastern source, 6; animal ornaments from, 36
Ruthwell, cross-shaft at, 32, 142

St. Austremoine, Issoire, 258, 263, 264
St. Bénigne, Dijon: rebuilt by William of Volpiano, 88; destroyed by fire, 89; crypt of, 90, 91, 225; sculpture from, in Musée Archéologique, 91
St. Benoît-sur-Loire, 126
St. Clair-sur-Epte, Treaty of, 444
St. Denis, 464 *et seq.*; influence of, 130, 144, 225, 319, 335, 479; consecration of, 236, 437, 464; Gothic vaults of ambulatory, 466; tympanum of Last Judgment and sculptures at, 467; statues of portal, 468
St. Étienne, Caen: founded by William the Conqueror, 457 *et seq.*; *also* 446, 448, 450, 452
St. Étienne (Loire), 267, 269
St. Eutrope, Saintes, 356, 357; crypt, 358
St. Front, Périgueux, restoration of, by Abadie, 346, 347, 364; controversy over, 362 *et seq.*
St. Gall, Abbey of, Switzerland, 45
St. Genesius, Clermont-Ferrand, 250
St. Georges de Boscherville, 448, 452, 454; portal of Chapter House, 455
St. Gilles: town of, 396; church of, 397 *et seq.*; Peter of Castelnau murdered at, 190, 400; façade of, 399; statues at, by Brunus, 402. *Also* 50, 51, 69, 190, 390
St. Guilhem le Désert, 50; history of, 418 *et seq.*; abbey of, 424 *et seq.*
St. Hilaire, Poitiers, 307 *et seq.*; restored by Abadie, 308, 346
St. Iago de Compostela (St. James of Compostela): pilgrimage to shrine of, 47-50, 282; relics of, at St. Sernin, Toulouse, 204. *Also* 126, 200, 293, 424
St. Jean d'Aupt, Savoy, 438
St. John Lateran, Rome, equestrian statue at, 343
St. Julien, Brioude, 258
St. Laurent, crypt of, at Grenoble, 26
St. Maclou, Rouen, 448
St. Mark's, Venice, cupolas of, compared with St. Front, Périgueux, 362 *et seq.*
St. Martial, Limoges, 200; influence on Liturgical Drama, 316, 337
St. Martin of Tours, church of: radiating chapels at, 34, 35; pilgrimages to, 50; destruction of, 200, 201, 251, 280
St. Maximin, Provence, controversy with monks of Vézelay over relics of Magdalene, 126, 128, 140
St. Michael, Dijon, 93
St. Nectaire, 258, 260; capitals at, 261, 262; Treasure of, 263
St. Omer, Rouen, founded by Clotaire I., 26
St. Paul's Cathedral, London, dimensions compared with Abbey Church, Cluny, 114
St. Paul-Trois-Chateaux, 390
St. Père-sous-Vézelay, 127
St. Peter's, Rome, 101; dimensions compared with Abbey Church, Cluny, 114
St. Philbert de Grandlieu, 37
St. Philibert, Tournus, vaulting at, 40

St. Pierre, Cathedral of, Angoulême, 346 *et seq.*; rebuilt by Gérard de Blaye, 347; restoration by Abadie, 348; façade, 349; Christ in Glory, 349, 350
St. Pierre, Aulnay, 332 *et seq.*
St. Pierre, Cathedral of, Poitiers, 305; twelfth-century glass in chevet of, 318, 319
St. Pierre, Cathedral of, Saintes, 356
St. Pierre de Chauvigny, 329, 330
St. Pierre, Melle, 344, 345
St. Pierre, Vienne, walls of, 26
St. Porchaire, Poitiers, 318
St. Restitut, Provence, 389
St. Sauveur de Figeac, 200
St. Savin sur Gartempe, Abbey Church of, 321; spire, 321; history of, 322; frescoes of, 323-328
St. Sernin. *See* Toulouse
St. Thierry, Abbot of, letter of St. Bernard to, denouncing sculpture, 78, 111, 142
St. Trophime, Arles, 69
St. Vitale, Ravenna, 37
Ste. Foy, Conques, 200, 277 *et seq.*; Treasure of, 279; comparison of, with St. Sernin, 280; tympanum of, 280-282; Majesté d'Or at, 283; "A" of Charlemagne, 285
Ste. Geneviève, Paris, founded by Clovis, 26
Ste. Marie des Dames, Saintes, 359; façade of, 360
Ste. Marthe, Tarascon, 389, 390
Ste. Radegonde, Poitiers, 318
Saintes, 354 *et seq.*; Roman remains at, 355; St. Eutrope, 356-358; Ste. Marie des Dames, 359. *See also* 50, 351
Saintonge, 70, 289, 290; type of façade in, 310; landscape of, 351; domed churches in, 361
Santa Sophia, Constantinople, 17
Schools of Romanesque architecture, French, German, Lombard, 53; in Auvergne, 53, 255 *et seq.*, 280; Burgundy, 53, 85 *et seq.*, 224 *et seq.*; Île de France, 53, 54, 431 *et seq.*, 464 *et seq.*; Languedoc (Toulouse), 53, 198 *et seq.*, 224 *et seq.*, 229 *et seq.*, 280; Normandy, 53, 431 *et seq.*; Poitou and Aquitaine, 53, 309 *et seq.*; Provence, 53, 387 *et seq.*
Sens, silk textile in Treasure of Cathedral, 79 (footnote)
Sernin, St., legend of, 201
Shaw, Bernard, *St. Joan*, 106 (footnote)
Sidonius Apollinaris. *See* Apollinaris
Sluter, Claus: head of Atelier at Champmol, 95; church of Chartreuse, 97; Puits de Moise, 98; sculptures of chapel, 99
Souillac, 231 *et seq.*; trumeau, 232; bas-relief, legend of Theophilus, 233
Spiers, Mr. Phenie, and St. Front, Périgueux, 362 *et seq.*
Squinches: domes on, 361; at Le Puy, 271; at St. Hilaire, Poitiers, 308
Stained glass: early use of, 27; symbolism in, 73; at Brou, 172; at St. Pierre, Poitiers, 319; at Chartres, 474 *et seq.*
Stendhal, criticism of sculpture at Autun, 158
Strabo, Walafried, *Glose Ordinaire* of, 73
Strong, Mrs. Arthur, *Roman Sculpture*, 10
Strzygowski, 6, 30, 40, 60, 66, 343
Suger, Abbot of St. Denis: protects Abélard, 112; at Vézelay, 130; attitude to Second Crusade, 130; death of, 297; genius of, 319; ogival vaults of, at St. Denis, 437; builds basilica St. Denis, 465-467. *Also* 20, 55, 73, 142, 144, 205, 225, 231, 306, 315, 319, 335
Symbolic formulæ, Byzantine, Syrian, Alexandrian, 75
Symbolic literature, 72, 73, 75 *et seq.*
Symbolism: in Eastern cults, 7; in Christian art, 8, 11, 20; in Persian and Merovingian art, 62; in Romanesque sculpture, 66, 71 *et seq.*; in Gothic art, 73
Symbols of Evangelists. *See* Iconography
Synod of Whitby, 32
Syria, 4, 5, 19, 21; early churches in, 24, 25; Arab conquest of, 28, 30; Romanesque art spreads to, 40, 57, 60; trade relations with, 62

Tarn, river, 214, 231, 291
Terret, Abbé Victor, of Autun: works on Burgundian art, 78, 79; views on Vézelay, 135, 137; on symbolism, 74, 122, 149, 151 *et seq.*; bas-relief of Eve, 160
Theodora, Empress, 65
Theodoric the Goth, 17, 33
Theodosius, Roman Emperor, 17

Theophilus: legend of, on bas-relief at Souillac, 231, 233; at Notre Dame de Paris, 234 (footnote)
Toulouse, 181 *et seq.*; religious strife in, 183; centre of Albigensian heresy, 185; Counts of, 183 *et seq.*; favour shown by Roger II. to Albigenses, 188; vacillations of Raymond VI., 189; does penance before doors of St. Gilles for murder of Peter of Castelnau, 190, 397, 400; crusade against, by Pope Innocent III., 190; annexation of by Philip Augustus, 192
School of Sculpture at, 198 *et seq.* La Daurade, church and cloisters of, 206. St. Étienne, cloisters of, 204. St. Sernin, 198 *et seq.*; Raymond Gérard, architect of, 201; historiated capitals of triforium, 202; tympanum of Ascension, 203; marble bas-reliefs in ambulatory, 203; crypt of, 204; *also* 39, 40, 280
Museum, sculpture in, 205 *et seq.*; statues and capitals from La Daurade, 210 *et seq.*; marble pillar from Narbonne, 212; bas-relief, two women, from St. Sernin, 205; statues of Apostles and capitals from St. Étienne, 207 *et seq.*; group of Annunciation, 213
Influence of school on Moissac, 224; on Beaulieu, 229; on Souillac, 231; on Cahors, 235; on Angoulême, 350
Tours, battle of, 411
Tours, Gregory of, 26, 32
Trent, Council of, 74
Treviers, Bernard de, Canon of Maguelone, 411
Trophime, St., legendary saint, 386
Troubadours, 193-197; Guilhem, Duke of Aquitaine, first of the Troubadours, 195, 296
Tyler, Mr. Royall, 19, 226

Urban II., 46, 105; consecration of choir of Cluny by, 114; consecration of St. Sernin by, 210; at Clermont-Ferrand, 243; at St. Gilles, 400; at Maguelone, 411
Urban V., 105

Vaison, Provence, 390
Val les Dunes, battle of, 445
Valerian, Roman Emperor, 355
Vallée d'Absinthe. *See* Clairvaux
Vasselot, Monsieur Marquet de: on Mohammedan influence in Romanesque churches, 67; on ancient doors at Le Puy, 274
Vault, problem of, 6, 35, 39 *et seq.*, 55; known to Persians, 40, 41; use of, by Romans, 41, 54; importance of, in development of Gothic style, 432-435; structural value of ogival ribs, 433; known to Lombards, 436; applied in Île de France, 437; ogival vaults at Durham Cathedral, 55, 437, 438; in Normandy and Île de France, 447; at St. Denis, 466; ogival ribs at Vézelay (narthex), 132; at Moissac, 216; at St. Gilles, 398; at Maguelone, 414; at St. Guilhem le Désert, 426
Velay, Le, 266, 269
Vercingetorix, 242, 244
Verdus, river, 421
Verneilh, Monsieur Félix de, theory of, about domes of St. Front, Périgueux, 362 *et seq.*
Vézelay, 125 *et seq.*; conflict of abbots with communes and murder of Abbot Artaud, 128; decay of town, 129; Second Crusade preached at, by St. Bernard, 130. Abbey Church of la Madeleine, 131 *et seq.*; relics at, 126; foundation and wealth of, 127; restoration of, by Viollet le Duc, 132, 140; narthex, portals, tympana, 132-138; nave, 139; historiated capitals at, 140-145; consecrated by Innocent II., 141; compared with Autun, 141-144
Vienne, early Christian settlement at, 24
Viollet le Duc: restoration of Vézelay, 131 *et seq.*; of St. Sernin, Toulouse, 199; supports de Verneilh's theories of St. Front, Périgueux, 362
Virgin Mary, growth of cult of, 156, 234, 236, 481 *et seq.* *See also* Iconography
Visigoths: at Toulouse, 183; Sidonius at court of, 249
Vöge, Herr, 387
Voisin, Antoine, glass-worker at Brou, 172
Volpiano, William of, 88; rebuilds St. Bénigne, Dijon, 89-91; his learned monks, 89, 225, 226; at Fécamp, 450; at Bernay, 451
Voragine, Jacopo de, *Golden Legend*, 73, 150

Wars of Religion, damage done by, 131, 346; at Châtres, 351; at Maguelone, 412; at Montpellier, 407; in Poitou, 291; at St. Gilles, 398; at St. Savin, 322; at Saintes, 356
Werve, Claus de, work at Puits de Moïse, Dijon, 98
Westminster Abbey, French influence in, 438
Whitby, Synod of, 32
Wilfred, St., sends to Italy for workmen, 32
William the Conqueror, 55, 443-445; marriage with Matilda of Flanders, 445, 446, 448; buried at Etienne, Caen, 458, 459
William, Duke of Aquitaine, first of Troubadours, 195, 196, 296
William, Duke of Aquitaine, founder, with Bernon, of monastery of Cluny, 103, 104
William Longsword, Duke of Normandy, 444
Winchester Cathedral, 448
Wise and Foolish Virgins, drama of, at St. Martial, Limoges, 316, 337. *See also* Iconography

Zodiac, Signs of the. *See* Iconography

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